

IDENTITY FORMATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
IN CORPORATE AMERICA:
THREE JOURNEYS TO TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

A Dissertation

by

ASE DAGMAR KNABEN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2010

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

IDENTITY FORMATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
IN CORPORATE AMERICA:
THREE JOURNEYS TO TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

A Dissertation

by

ASE DAGMAR KNABEN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Larry Dooley
	Stjepan Mestrovic
Committee Members,	Linda Skrla
	Susan Lynham
Head of Department,	Frederick Nafukho

May 2010

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

ABSTRACT

Identity Formation of Women in Leadership Positions in Corporate America: Three Journeys
to Top Leadership Positions. (May 2010)

Ase Dagmar Knaben, B.S., Stavanger University College;

M. Phil., Tromsø University

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Larry Dooley
Dr. Stjepan Mestrovic

The purpose of this study was to understand and interpret the identity formation of women on their journeys to leadership positions in corporate America. The narratives of these women in leadership positions described their experiences of how they became who they are, their experiences of critical points, their achievements and their sacrifices in their lives on their journey to these positions.

The dissertation design was an empirical, qualitative, interpretive study which simultaneously drew upon and developed the theoretical work of Erik H. Erikson regarding the concept of ego-identity. Women in this study were purposively selected based on criteria for this research. They were successful females in engineering management positions, which is a male-dominated field. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews.

Three main themes about their self-knowledge emerged from the findings in the study as components in the women's identity formation. These components shaped and developed the women to become who they are today, starting as a process from early childhood and until today. The three main themes are as follows: relations between mothers and daughters, a

delayed moratorium and inner strength. The women in this study are unanimous in regard to singling out the significance of their mothers. Their mothers have been instrumental to their futures in regard to education in a male- oriented area and in giving them a “sense of being all right.” Furthermore, these women seemed to undergo a delayed moratorium state as adults. This finding was a departure from and an addition to Erik H. Erikson’s concept of “moratorium”, in that I found that these successful women were able to make-up for their inability to obtain a moratorium in young adulthood by fashioning it in mid-life.

They described these experiences of getting closer to themselves and what life was really about. Finally, this study revealed that these women had an inner strength to go on when they faced obstacles and hurdles in their careers and their personal lives. This inner strength consisted of resilience and authenticity, an ability to stay true to themselves.

DEDICATION

To my parents,
my mother, Edith J. Knaben and in memory of my father, Lars Knaben,
for their unconditional love

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work could not have been completed without the support and guidance of many people. First, I am thankful to the women who shared their experiences with me regarding their journeys. My committee members, Dr. Dooley, Dr. Skrla, Dr. Lynham and Dr. Mestrovic, have been invaluable sources of guidance and assistance. For Dr. Dooley and Dr. Skrla, I am thankful for the insights shared with me. For Dr. Lynham, I am appreciative of introducing me to the field of HRD and encouraging me to begin this journey. And finally, I am thankful for my co-chair, Dr. Mestrovic, who has done more than any student could expect. His expertise, guidance and leadership I will always appreciate. He challenged me to produce my best and continued to encourage me to go on and go further. Thank you for your time, our conversations, and your continual help.

My sons, Lasse and Oyvind, I cannot thank you enough for supporting me on this journey. There have been sacrifices you have had to make because I have lived the last 6 years in America. Oyvind, you and I started this journey together in College Station, but after one year, you went back to Norway, still only 17½ years old. You are fabulous sons and I am very grateful for you and I love you very much. And my mother ... how can I ever thank you enough? You have always been encouraging to me and have had high expectations of me. I don't know how many conversations we have had across the Atlantic Ocean discussing Erikson's work. I thank you most of all for being such a loving and caring mother to me and grandmother to my sons while I have been away. Also, I thank my friends in Norway and America for your interest in my work. Last, but not least, Walter, my husband and best friend, thank you for being kind and loving and for your belief in me and your encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	8
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Operational Definitions.....	10
Assumptions and Limitations.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Significance of the Study and Applicability to HRD.....	15
Contents of the Dissertation.....	16
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Understanding the Multiple Aspects of Women's Lives.....	19
Women and the Glass Ceiling.....	24
Identity Formation of Women from a Feminist Point of View.....	27
Women's Identity, Women's Issues, and Human Resource Development.....	31
An Introduction to Erik Homburger Erikson.....	34
Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development.....	37
Basic Trust Versus Basic Mistrust (Birth to 18 months).....	40
Autonomy Versus Shame and Doubt (18 months to 3 Years).....	41
Initiative Versus Guilt (3 to 5 Years).....	43
Industry Versus Inferiority (5 to 12 or 13 Years).....	43
Identity Versus Role Confusion (12 to 18 Years).....	44
Intimacy Versus Isolation (18 to 35 Years).....	45
Generativity Versus Stagnation (35 to 55 or 60 Years).....	46
Ego Integrity Versus Despair (From 60 Years).....	47
Summary of the Review of Literature.....	51

CHAPTER	Page
III METHODOLOGY.....	52
Sample.....	60
Data Collection Procedures.....	61
Data Analysis.....	64
Trustworthiness.....	66
Ethical Issues.....	68
Summary of Research Procedures.....	69
IV FINDINGS.....	70
Profession.....	71
Families.....	71
Education, Work, and Adult Life.....	73
Church.....	75
The Glass Ceiling.....	76
Linda.....	78
Ann.....	90
Amanda.....	105
Summary of Findings.....	116
V CONCLUSION.....	120
Main Themes.....	120
Limits and Recommendations.....	129
Last Words from Researcher.....	133
REFERENCES.....	135
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	147
APPENDIX B: PRESENTATION LETTER.....	150
VITA	152

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Erik Erikson (1978) analyzed Ingmar Bergman's film "Wild Strawberries," and a quote from this essay provides an understanding of the identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions within a context: "Existence at their age in that spot on earth in that period of cultural and historical determination. It is this that makes them prototypical for human beings in other times and places thus existential in the most concrete sense of the word" (p. 3). The journey of shaping one's identity from a little girl to becoming a woman is in many ways an unconscious process. However, this unconscious process manifests itself in the formation of who one is. How does this happen? Erikson (1980) claimed that the term *identity* "expresses a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 109).

The researcher's goal in this study is to examine the identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions in the U.S. corporate environment on the Gulf Coast area. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that, "Our research interest comes out of our own narratives of experience and shapes our narrative inquiry plotline" (p. 121). For me, it started with my teaching background and my interest in women and leadership. It took me on a journey from Europe to the United States inquiring about women's issues, including the "glass ceiling," which led me to question women's identity formation. This

The style and format for this dissertation will follow that of Human Resources Development Quarterly.

again led me to inquire into feminist views on identity, which led me to Erikson, who was “Identity’s architect” according to Friedman (1999).

The study is a qualitative study where the approach is interpretive, which means that it is “guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). *Leadership* in this study is defined as the capacity to lead in a position and *corporation* is defined as an association of employers and employees in a basic industry (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2007). Because women have been marginalized regarding leadership positions in the past, they are currently underrepresented in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2007a). For example, Klenke (1996) argued in her book *Women and Leadership* that it was not until the 1980s that women leaders reached a critical mass and began to gain visibility.

To explain some of the gap between women and men in leadership positions in corporate America, data from Fortune 500 companies and the U.S. Department of Labor were used. The Fortune 500 is a ranking of the top 500 U.S. public corporations as measured by gross revenue. In 2008, for the Fortune 500 companies, only 3% of the CEO positions were held by women. Also for this group, women represented only 15% of the board seats and 16% of the corporate officer positions during the same period (Catalyst, 2009). Moving from Fortune 500 companies to a broader sampling representing all sizes of U.S. companies, in 2007 women in general management increased to 26%. However, women’s representation in engineering management positions dropped to 8% (U.S. DOL, 2008).

There is therefore evidence that some women do make it to top positions in U.S. companies, although they are few in number. This evidence provokes a number of

identity-related questions, such as: Who are they? How did they get to these positions? What has characterized their identity formation on their journey to these positions of leadership? There is a need to better understand the dynamics that have enabled women to overcome obstacles and successfully attain leadership positions.

Kanter (1993) found that even if women populated organizations, they seldom ran them. The statement “One is not born but rather becomes a woman” (Beauvoir, 1989, p. vii) led me to the interest of identity formation in women who make it to leadership positions in the corporate world. This quote by Beauvoir (1989) suggested a human process where a woman’s development is a reciprocal process between the human and the environment. Thus, this human process suggested a construction of women’s identity throughout the life span (Hoffman, 2006; Gullestad, 2003). Beauvoir’s perspective is related to Erikson’s (1980) regarding identity formation as a mutual process of sameness within oneself and sharing with others. These views of Beauvoir and Erikson point to the core of the process of identity formation as human process that involves the individual and society simultaneously.

In the inquiry into identity formation of women as they pursue and reach leadership positions, questions about identity and how identity develops needed to be addressed. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2007), *identity* is defined as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. When Erikson (1968) used the term *identity formation*, he argued that the context had to be considered in the process of an individual’s growth. Furthermore, he argued that this developmental process is going on inside the individual at the same time as the individual deals with what is going on outside the individual. Erikson (1968) claimed that the historical context or socio-cultural

environment impacts the individual's development on the inside. He used the term *development* to refer to an individual's growth but claimed that the inclusion of cultural conditions as factors of identity development tends to be more of a process of identity formation.

Researchers who have been concerned about human development include but are not limited to Belenky et al. (1997), Friedan (2001), Gilligan (1993), Kegan (1982), and Levinson (1996). They have all referred to Erikson's work on human identity. Josselson (1987) stated that the literature showed that the most important theorist on identity has been Erikson (1968, 1980, 1985). Erikson argued that the term *identity* "expresses a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (1980, p. 109). However, identity is never established as something fixed or unchangeable (Erikson, 1968); identity is not a property that an individual achieves. Rather it is an ongoing process within an individual during a lifetime. Thus, identity formation results from many different elements in an individual's life. For example, events that occur in an individual's life are like benchmarks in the human life cycle.

According to Sugarman (1986), these identity-forming events are turning points that give new directions to an individual's life. There are numerous discussions among researchers and theorists about how identity and identity formation are viewed in terms of gender, and whether there is a difference between women and men in this regard.

According to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997), women have been nearly absent as theorists in the social sciences and therefore are also absent in creating their own history about women's lives. Thus, central to studies about women and how women

develop their identity is the notion that women's voices have not yet been heard (Belenky et al., 1997; Gilligan, 1993; Josselson, 1987; Levinson, 1996).

According to Belenky et al. (1997), findings from studies on identity formation have been generalized from men to women. A consequence of Belenky et al.'s research is increased knowledge about how women view their own identity formation. Even so, there is a need for more information about what shapes women's identity and what factors in their identity formation have enabled them to become successful leaders. According to Belenky et al. (1997), assumptions about what is true, understanding reality, and understanding how we know what we know all shape an individual's world view and their identity.

Extant literature highlights many difficulties still reported by women in getting to the top of corporate organizations. One explanation for these difficulties is the phenomenon called the "glass ceiling" (Bertrand & Hallock, 2001; Klenke, 1996; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Rosener, 1990). The term was originally used as a metaphor to describe and explain a hurdle that was present but could not be seen (covert hurdles). Subsequently, the term "glass ceiling" has often been used in the discussion of difficulties that women experience in the corporate environment. According to Catalyst's 2007b report from the study of Fortune 500 companies, *The Bottom Line*, companies with the highest representation of women board directors attained significantly higher financial performance, on average, than those with the lowest representation of women board directors. There are several studies that suggest that gender diversity increases the growth of companies' earnings (Krishnan & Parsons, 2008). Studies also suggested that gender diversity influenced growth orientation and organizational culture (Dwyer, Richard, &

Chadwick, 2003). Studies also showed a relationship between the proportion of women in top management teams (TMTs) and organizational performance (Krishnan & Park, 2005). Factors that are hurdles for women in reaching a leadership position need to be explored further.

To understand the identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions in corporate America, there is a need to understand multiple aspects of such women's lives, one such aspect being their experiences with covert barriers such as the "glass ceiling." In her book *Finding Herself, Pathways to Identity Development in Women*, Josselson (1987) provided insight into the identity formation of a group of college-educated women. She engaged in understanding the experiences of "normal" women and in doing so contributed new understanding to the body of knowledge regarding identity formation in women. When Josselson (1987) referred to "normal" individuals, she described them as "nonpatients."

Gilligan (1993) argued that bringing women and women's lives into history changed the voice of how the human story is told. Since the 1960s, feminists have discussed the distinction between *sex* as being biological and *gender* as being a social or cultural category (Moi, 2005). Looking back at history, one can see that U.S. women were concerned about other aspects of their lives than those that concern women today, from fighting for the right to vote and an equal opportunity for education (Brody 2004) to who should define a woman's place in society (Goldin & Shim, 2004). Betty Friedan (2001) discussed the woman's role in the industrialized society, and Scanlon (2009) debated women of today that celebrates women's individuality, by accepting and understanding the

diversity of women's lives. Finally, Butler (2008) discussed the varied performances of gender, meaning that the body is constructed as gender.

This study is an extension of the human story as told by three women and their experiences with identity formation on their journey to leadership positions in corporate America. The importance of voice in the study of social experiences is aptly encapsulated in a wonderful old African proverb: "Until lions have their own 'storytellers,' tales of a lion hunt will always glorify the hunter!"

Individual growth, an important aspect of identity formation, occurs within a social context. Erikson (1968) argued this point: "We cannot separate personal growth and communal change" (p. 23). His view reflects a reciprocal process between an individual's growth and a greater context. This perspective, of a reciprocity between actor and context, is echoed in Riesman's (2001) view of social character, where social character is defined as "the more or less permanent socially and historically conditioned organization of an individual's drives and satisfaction" (p. 4).

Context, claimed Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997), is crucial to understanding the human experience, as context becomes a reference point and is used to "place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do" (p. 41).

The three women who are the focus of this study have been (and continue to be) faced with many life, career, and related choices and decisions. In her study, Gilligan (1993) described how women search for a way to solve the tension they feel between responsibilities to others and their own self-development. On their journey to such

leadership positions, these women have had to face the society that surrounded them and, in so doing, also experience the tensions Gilligan (1993) describes.

Statement of the Problem

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the intention of the researcher is always to obtain a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. The focus of this study was to better understand the identity formation of women who achieved a leadership position in corporate America. From research we know that in 2008, for Fortune 500 companies, only 3% of CEO positions were held by women. Also, the same group of women represented only 15% of the board seats and 16% of the corporate officer positions during the same period (Catalyst, 2009). Moving from Fortune 500 companies to a broader sampling representing all U.S. companies in 2007, women in general management positions increased to 26%. However, for engineering managers, the representation drops to only 8% (U.S. DOL, 2008). These numbers “indicated” that some women do indeed make it to formal leadership positions in corporate America but not many.

We also know that more and more women are participating in the same work environment as men. For example, in 2008, women made up 46.7% of the total U.S. labor force (U.S. DOL, 2009). As a result of their increasing participation in the U.S. labor force, organizations will be expected to have more women in leadership positions in the future.

Over a decade ago, the Department of Labor, DOL argued that breaking the “glass ceiling” was an economic priority that the nation could no longer afford to ignore. They claimed that it was an economic imperative driven by recent dramatic shifts in three areas that were fundamental to business success: (1) changes in the demographics of the labor force, (2) changes in the demographics of national consumer markets, and (3) rapid

globalization of the marketplace. They further argued that diversity in the workplace would be crucial to compete successfully in this emerging environment and that the nation needed the talents of all qualified individuals, regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity, at the highest levels of corporate America to do so.

The information provided by the DOL in 2008 and 2009 shows plainly the demand for all qualified individuals to contribute in this competitive environment. Despite this growing demand for diversity in the workplace, though, not much is known about the women who do achieve corporate leadership position in the United States and, more specifically, in the Gulf Coast area. Even less is known about the role *identity formation* plays in their journey to these formal positions of leadership.

Therefore, the researcher of this study will explore the identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions in the corporate U.S. environment in the Gulf Coast area. The above deductive reasoning provides an argument for the problem of this study and is formulated in the purpose of the study, addressed next.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry is to better understand (1) the identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions in corporations in the USA Gulf Coast area, (2) the obstacles, excitement, growth, and personal changes these women experienced as they traveled on their journey to leadership positions, and (3) the role of these factors in these women's identity formation on their journey to success. Four research questions were asked to get the information needed for this study.

- What were the experiences of these women leaders in the USA Gulf Coast area, and what stories could they tell me?

- What have been critical points in their lives on their journey to leadership positions?
- What have the women leaders achieved on their journeys?
- What have the women leaders sacrificed to become successful leaders?

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are exclusive and chosen as meaningful working definitions for this study and are used throughout the study.

Executive: Administrative or managerial responsibility (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, (2007)

Identity: A mutual relation in that it connotes a persistent sameness within oneself and persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others (Erikson, 1980).

Identity formation: A process wherein the individual judges himself/herself in the light of what he/she perceives to be the way in which others judge him/her in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them (Erikson, 1968).

Identity development: A move from dependence to autonomy (Josselson, 1987).

Position: Social or official rank or status (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2007)

Position of power: The power a person derives from a particular office or rank in a formal organizational system (Northouse, 2001).

Leadership: The office or position of a leader (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2007)

Women's development: An ongoing balance between self-world and self-in-relation (Josselson, 1987).

Assumptions and Limitations

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made by the researcher:

- The researcher was the primary instrument for gathering data in this study.
Building trustworthiness between the researcher and the interviewees (respondents) was the most important issue when collecting and analyzing data.
- The interviewee understood the scope of the study and the interview questions and responded accordingly.
- The methodology proposed and described offered the most logical and appropriate design for this particular research project.

The limitations were identified by the researcher, and narrowed the scope of the study to the following:

- The scope of this study was limited to three women in leadership positions in the USA Gulf Coast area.
- The findings of the study therefore may not be generalized to a broader population.
- This study was limited to the information acquired from the literature review and the study instrumentation.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research study that seeks to provide understanding and interpretation of the identity formation of three women's experiences on their journey to leadership positions in the USA Gulf Coast area. To capture the complexity of human experience and organizational life, narratives were used as the method of inquiry (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). According to Creswell (2007), "narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals" (p. 55).

A definition of *qualitative research* has to be viewed within a context, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), and they offer the following generic definition: “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). As a researcher, I am situated within a context, where my goal is *to picture* the women’s experiences through a narrative truth (Lincoln, 2000).

The worldview or the paradigm in this study was understood as “a highly subjective phenomenon that is interpreted rather than measured” (Merriam, 1991, p. 48). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) support this statement and claim that the time when researchers conduct research by engaging in value-free inquiry is over. The view of the researcher in qualitative research is that of the world as always changing and focuses on the process wherein the new perspectives are constructed and new knowledge is developed (Merriam, 1991). In its broadest sense, qualitative research is related to pragmatism as it was established by G. H. Mead, W. James, J. Dewey, and others.

This research methodology also includes being involved in the research process, which is to use oneself as a tool to gather data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). “With the epistemological assumption, conducting a qualitative study means that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). From this point of view, the researcher in this study had to manage boundaries with the women being interviewed. In fact, this research was also a journey for the researcher, similar to the traveler metaphor used by Kvale (1996) to describe the role of the researcher in this kind of research.

A qualitative researcher is concerned about the individual's point of view.

“Qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 10). Through detailed interviewing, the researcher is beginning a new story. The principal intent in experience is the growth and transformation in the life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In this study, the descriptions of the women's experiences can give insight into the “whole” by exploring a portion of the “whole.” Because all the “parts” of reality are interrelated, an understanding of the “whole” can begin with a holistic investigation of any portion of this whole claimed (Erlandson et al., 1993). The goal is to search for the “central story and developing a convincing and authentic narrative” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Merriam (2001) claimed also that, in interpretive research, understanding the meaning of the experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, theory-generating mode of inquiry. An understanding of what this means is that qualitative analysis is grounded in data and is not speculative or abstract according to Schwandt (2001). The gathered information is framed inductively in relation to Erikson's theory (1968, 1980, 1985). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claimed “for us narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18).

Participant Selection

To attain the needed information for this study, purposive sampling was implemented. According to Schwandt (2001), purposive sampling is chosen for the relevance to the research questions and because there may be good reason to believe that “what goes on there” is critical to understand some processes (p. 232). The population of this study consists of three women in leadership positions in selected organizations located

in the USA Gulf Coast area. They were chosen because they were in leadership positions and had extensive business experience. The participants were white women in their early 50s. All of them are highly paid managers working for corporations two of which are a Fortune 500 companies and one a subsidiary of a Fortune 500 company. All three women are engineers working in the oil and gas business, which is a male-dominated industry.

Data Collection

The sources of the collected data are in-depth interviews of the three women leaders. The data were collected by interviewing the women, which meant that I needed to be involved in the research process by using myself as an instrument to gather data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The intent of the interviews was to collect information about the women's identity formation during their childhood and adolescence through the present day. I observed during the interview the situation of the participant and at the same time my own reflection on the situation. Fontana and Frey (2005) discussed gender in interviewing situations, and I observed that we both interviewer and participant were women, which probably had an impact on the situation. Thus, the interviews became more of a conversation, as Fog (1994), Kvale (1996), and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have argued. In addition to these orthodox procedures for conducting a qualitative study, I framed (Goffman, 1986) their responses in relation to Erikson's theory of identity formation.

Data Analysis

A qualitative study involves an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis (Erlandson et al., 1993). I experienced this relationship as an ongoing process of reflection or inseparable relationship during the interviews and the observations. A

reflection process starts from the first moment of the first meeting between the researcher and the participant. Interpretation of those reflections and observations is seen as a higher level of abstraction, “a perspective gained from a distance through reflection on what is less visible and less apparent, and in conjunction with a theoretical and conceptual framework,” according to Price (1999, p. 16). The results of the data analysis consist of the participants’ experiences and the researchers’ intention of obtaining a better understanding of the subject matter.

Significance of the Study and Applicability to Human Resource Development

This study, about women on their journey to leadership positions in the USA Gulf Coast area, is an attempt to reach a new understanding about the meaning of identity formation. The analysis generated answers to the questions that addressed (1) the identity formation of these women on their journey to leadership positions in corporations in the Gulf Coast area, (2) the obstacles, excitement, growth, and personal changes these women experienced as they traveled on their journey to leadership positions, and (3) the role of these factors in these women’s identity formation on their journey to success. The findings in the study add some new information to existing knowledge about identity formation.

I sought to participate in the “process of calibration between the conceptual framework, the developing hypothesis and the collection of grounded data” as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997, p. 43) put forth. As noted previously, my conceptual framework is Erik Erikson’s theory of identity formation as applied to women. From this perspective, I linked the women’s understanding of their lives and constructed meaning at another level of analysis as Josselson (1995) argued. From a human resource development (HRD) perspective, research on women in leadership positions and their identity

formation should be of value. A comprehensive literature search in HRD journals and Academy Human Resource Development (AHRD) proceedings (1998–2005) indicated that little information exists about women and their identity formation on their journey to leadership positions.

Most of the HRD literature about CEOs and top managers is of general interest and not specifically about women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. Bierema and Cseh (2003) evaluated 600 AHRD papers from 1996 to 2000 and claimed that “nearly absent from literature are studies concerned with women and diverse peoples' experiences” (p. 3). The definition of *human resource development* at Texas A&M University is “the process of improving learning and performance in individual, group and organization context through domains of expertise such as lifelong learning, career development, training and development, and organization development” (Texas A&M University, The Department of Educational Administration & Human Resource Development, 2002).

As a result of women's participation in the labor force, more organizations will need to have an increased number of women in leadership positions. Therefore, a study that seeks to understand and identify factors of women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions should be of interest for and value to HRD.

Contents of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to and an overview of the dissertation. Chapter II consists of a literature review of different aspects of women's lives that affect women's identity and identity formation at the present time and within a historical context. Erikson's theory of psychosocial

development in regard to identity formation is thereafter presented and discussed. Chapter III provides an understanding of qualitative research methodology, including methods for collecting and analyzing the data. Chapter IV provides an introduction to and the narratives of the three women as well as an analysis of the data. Chapter V provides conclusions from the study and recommendations for studies in the future.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some women make it to leadership positions in corporate America. Because there are so few who do so (Kanter, 1993), the question of how they make it is intriguing. What are these women's experiences and stories of their identity formation on their journeys to these leadership positions? In the field of human resource development (HRD) research on women and by women is needed, according to Bierema and Cseh (2003). Despite a growing demand for diversity in the workplace, which is also crucial to compete successfully according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2006), not much is known about the role identity formation plays in women's journeys to these top positions.

Introduction

This study is grounded in Erik Erikson's (1980, 1985, 1968) work on identity and identity formation as the basis of understanding and exploring the identity formation of the women in this research. As background for this study, the following sections provide literature that discusses an understanding of multiple aspects of women's lives; next, a discussion is provided from a feminists' point of view on identity; and then literature in the field of HRD that emphasizes women and women's issues is examined.

These sections are followed by an introduction to Erikson. Next, a presentation and a discussion of Erikson's (1985) theory of psychosocial development are provided. This discussion will guide the inquiry of women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions.

Understanding the Multiple Aspects of Women's Lives

To understand women's identity formation, there is a need to understand multiple aspects of women's lives. Assumptions about what is truth, or understanding of reality, shape an individual's worldview and hence her identity, according to Belenky et al. (1997). A goal of Belenky et al.'s research is to gain more knowledge about how women view their own identity formation. This is also a goal for this study.

The statement "one is not born but rather becomes a woman" is borrowed from Beauvoir's (1989, p. vii) book *The Second Sex* and led me to question identity formation in women who make it to a leadership position in the corporate world. In this book, Beauvoir presents her view of the female from psychological, historical, and economical perspectives in the male world. This quote by Beauvoir suggests a human process whereby women's development is a reciprocal process between humans and the environment. This human process suggests construction of a woman's identity throughout the life span or life cycle (Danish, 1981; Erikson, 1980; Hoffman, 2006; Gullestad, 2003; Sugarman, 1986). Beauvoir's perspective "is similar to" Erikson's (1980) view of identity formation as a mutual process of *sameness* within oneself and sharing with others. These views of Beauvoir and Erikson point to the core of the process of identity formation as one of a human process. Beauvoir claimed, "Humanity is something more than a mere species; it is a historical development it is to be defined by the manner in which it deals with its natural fixed characteristics, its facticity" (or problematic conditions of human beings) (1989, p. 716).

As a starting point, there is a need to shed light on the term "woman." Because there are connotations linked to the word "woman," these are briefly discussed next.

According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (2007), a *connotation* is the suggestion of a meaning by a word apart from the thing it explicitly names or describes. In this dissertation, the word *woman* is understood from “an ordinary understanding of what a woman is, namely a person with a female body” (Moi, 2005, p. 8). According to Moi, women’s bodies are not only female; they are human. In her book *What Is a Woman*, she (2005) discusses sex, gender, and feminist theory. She points to women’s multiple interests, their abilities, and their capacities, which she claimed is beyond the realm of sexual differences.

What is a woman? questioned Moi (2005, p. 8), and she answered *a human being* and quoted Simone De Beauvoir to this end. The reality a woman is faced with as a human being is also indicated in Heinamaa (1997, p. 24), when she referred to Beauvoir’s claim that “biological, psychological, and social facts and events cannot resolve the problem, because what we ultimately are faced with is a question of values and meanings.” Thus, according to Moi (2005), for Beauvoir (1989) and Heinamaa (1997) a woman is a person beyond the realm of sexual differences. As a woman and a human being, what she ultimately is faced with are questions of value and meanings.

Since the 1960s, feminists have discussed the distinction between “sex” as being *biological* and “gender” as a *social* or *cultural* category (Moi, 2005). Moi’s point is that regardless of how much one rethinks these concepts, it will not generate a good theory of the body or subjectivity (p. 4). She claimed that the “distinction between sex and gender is simply irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be a woman or a man in a given society” (p. 5). However, Moi (2005) claimed the distinction has been useful in rejecting biological determinism. On the other hand, she

claimed, feminists managed to reject biological determinism “long before they had two different words for sex to choose from” (p. 5).

Looking back through history, one can see that women’s concerns about aspects of their life have changed through time. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was a British educationalist and a feminist writer who was concerned about women’s place in society (Holmes, 1987). In her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), she argued for women and men to be educated equally. Although she did not bring women to the barricades, her writing was inspiring for women (Brody, 2004). Women historians have in the last 20 years been concerned with broadening the picture from what is called the first wave of feminism in the United States. Ginsberg (2002) claimed that historians have as a new view been looking at more ordinary relations among women and the environment, involving, for example, aspects such as what defined a woman’s place in a society and, further, questioning women’s loyalty to religion, motherhood, and marriage.

A related issue is that “the earliest known instance of a U.S woman who retained her surname upon marriage is Lucy Stone, the tireless antislavery and female suffrage crusader, who married in 1855” (Goldin & Shim, 2004, p. 143). In their study, they found that professional women in the United States are increasingly taking their husband’s surname. This is interesting, because a surname is connected to a woman’s identity and reflects the power hierarchy of a society (Boxer & Gritsenko, 2005).

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) wrote the *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), which has been considered the first major feminist work in the United States. In this essay, she discussed the economical, intellectual, political, and sexual aspects of feminism (CEE, 2009). However, after her husband died, according to Capper (1992, p. 20), Fuller traveled

among her seven children's homes for 25 years, "organizing their households, nursing their children, encouraging their careers, and indulging their foibles After her husband died and her children grew up, she became active in helping women (Capper, 1992).

The second wave of feminism, or the Women's Liberation Movement, started in the early 1960s and lasted into the 1990s (Evans, 1995). This movement refers to feminist activity and acknowledged its predecessors. The second-wave feminists addressed inequalities as they did in the first wave of feminism but broadened their concern to issues about family, issues at the workplace, sexual issues, and abortion. During the second wave of feminism, the number of women who kept their maiden name rose sharply but declined slightly in the 1990s, according to Goldin and Shim (2004).

In 1950, in her book *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir focused on women as *the other* in a patriarchal society. She explained that "*to be a woman would mean to be the object, the other*" (1989, p. 51). Beauvoir's theme in *The Second Sex* was that within a male-dominated ideology that penetrates a society, *activities* in that society will reinforce this ideology. Her point was that just because women are different than men, they should not be considered as the second sex in a society. In another bestselling book, *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963 (republished in 2001), Betty Friedan discussed women's roles in industrialized society, and those views are presented later. During the 1980s, the second wave collapsed, and no attempt was made to reconstruct it (Zack, 2005). In the 1990s, the third wave of feminism started in the United States (Scanlon, 2009). The third wave of feminism was concerned about "making right some of the second wave's wrongs" (Scanlon, 2009, p. 128). There are many different groups that represent the third wave of feminism. According to Scanlon (2009), the third-wave feminists are "accepting living in a

mainstream world, tolerate and even enjoy heterosexuality, refuse to be considered victims, and celebrate individualism, while others enjoy the varied performances of gender” (p. 128).

Scanlon (2009) made a distinction between the “third wave of feminism” and “post-feminist.” The third wave of feminism does not reject feminism outright, even if they try to move forward from “certain elements of the second wave, at the same time they recognize the debt they owe to the earlier movement” (128). However, Scanlon claimed that post-feminists rejected both the approaches and the gains of the second wave. As a result of these conflicting views, how is the feminist story told? Hemmings (2005) argued that instead of emphasizing the “discontinuities between different theoretical frameworks,” she would like to see “the feminist past ... as a series of ongoing contests and relationships rather than a process of imagined linear displacement” (p. 131).

According to Moi (2005), Butler has produced the most important work on sex and gender in the 1990s. She claimed that that Butler’s work has been important in regard to giving “an intellectual voice to gay and lesbian critics” (2005, p. 45). However, Moi (2005) questions Butler’s understanding of sex, gender, and the body. In her view, poststructuralists’ theories about sex and gender are “held prisoners by theoretical mirages of their own making” (p. 46). Heede (2008) argued that third-wave feminists are “mistresses of the art of rhetorical seduction and much of the argument can seem inseparably linked to specific and untranslatable rhetorical figures and strategies” (p. 207).

Butler claimed that her view of gender as performative means that “an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (2006, p. xv). Moi (2005) claimed that it “becomes

starkly evident in Butler's attempt to show that 'sex' or 'nature' or 'the body' is constructed as gender" (p. 46). Moi (2005) critiques the poststructuralist view when she says that "philosophical realism becomes a politically negative term." To do so, she adds, is absurd, because "to avoid biological determinism all we need to do is to deny that biological facts justify social values, and even the most recalcitrant realist can do that" (p. 43). Moi responds to Hull (1997) when she suggests that the poststructuralist view assumes that the "word *woman* can never be used in non-ideological ways, "that woman must mean heterosexual, feminine and female" (p. 43).

Moi (2005) claimed that words and, more often, words and concepts carry ideological implications. However, in most cases, and she cites Wittgenstein to this end, "the meaning of a word is its use" (p. 44). She adds that used in different situations, the word *woman* "takes on different meanings" (p. 44).

Women and the Glass Ceiling

From the discussion of how one may define and understand some aspects of a woman and a women's life, the next section will provide an overview of other more practical hurdles women have to face on their journey to leadership positions in corporations. Extant literature highlights many difficulties still reported by women getting to top leadership positions in American organizations. One explanation for these difficulties is the phenomenon called the "glass ceiling" (Bertrand & Hallock, 2001; Klenke, 1996; Meryerson & Fletcher, 2000; Rosener, 2000). Acker (1990) argued that the organizational structure is not neutral in regard to men and women; on the contrary, it is gendered. By "gendered," she means "that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a

distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (p. 146). This understanding of an organizational structure that is not neutral is expressed in the term “glass ceiling.”

In Wrigley’s (2002) study of women in public relations and communications management, the participants identified several factors that contributed to the glass ceiling. One factor was described as the “rigid gender role socialization which strongly reinforces the structure of society and of organizations” (p. 43). Goodman, Fields and Blum (2003) found in their study that the exclusion of women in top management positions is evidence of the glass ceiling. Similarly, Lee and James (2007) found in their study that low representation of women in top management positions seems to reinforce the stereotype that women are less qualified for such positions than men. The findings from Wrigley (2002), Goodman, Fields and Blum (2003) and Lee and James (2007) support Acker’s (1990) statement.

The term “glass ceiling” was popularized in an article that appeared in 1986 in the *Wall Street Journal* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1995). This article by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) described the invisible barriers that women confront as they approached the top of the corporate hierarchy. The term was used as a metaphor to describe and explain a hurdle that was present but could not be seen (covert hurdles). Subsequently, the term “glass ceiling” has often been used in the discussion of difficulties that women experience in the corporate environment.

According to Catalyst’s 2007b report, *The Bottom Line*, companies with the highest representation of women board directors attained significantly higher financial performance, on average, than those with the lowest representation of women board

directors. These results were from the study of Fortune 500 companies. Additionally, the report pointed out that in general, performance was stronger than average in companies with three or more women board directors. There are several studies that suggest that gender diversity increases the growth of company earnings (Krishnan & Parsons, 2008); studies also suggested that gender diversity influenced growth orientation and organizational culture (Dwyer, Richard, & Chadwick, 2003). Studies also indicated a relationship between the proportion of women in top management teams (TMTs) and organizational performance (Krishnan & Park, 2005).

According to Helfat, Harris, and Wolfson (2007), it seems that there will be a slow increase in female CEOs during the next 5 to 10 years. However, the percentages that are women remain relatively low.

In the classic book and winner of the C. Wright Mills Award, *The Men and Women of the Corporation*, Kanter (1993) discussed organizational structures and how these structures defined the roles and status of men and women in U.S corporations. Kanter found that even if women populated these organizations, they seldom ran them, although women make up 46.7% of the total labor force in the United States (U.S. DOL, 2009). This imbalance is changing, but under-representation is still prevalent. Similar to Kanter (1993), Zelechowski and Bilimoria (2004) found that women in corporations held fewer top positions and corporate titles and earned less than men due to a pay gap between women and men. Blau and Kahn (2007) reported that even if there has been an increase in women's pay since the 1970s, the gender pay gap remains.

Particularly in light of the benefits of gender diversity, factors that are hurdles for women in getting to leadership positions need to be explored further. Therefore, one

aspect of women in such positions that must be understood is their experience with covert barriers, such as the “glass ceiling.” Another factor that needs to be explored is the identity formation of the women who do make it to top positions in corporations.

Identity Formation of Women from a Feminist Point of View

There are many types of feminists and feminism: “a feminist at the most simplistic level is a person who seeks economic, social, and political equality between sexes,” claimed Bierema and Cseh (2003, p. 8). *Feminism* is also defined as organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests (*Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*, 2007).

In her influential book *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan (1993) states that “From Erik Erikson, I learned that you cannot take a life out of history, that life-history and history, psychology and politics, are deeply entwined” (1993, p. xi). During the second wave of feminism, or the women’s movement of the 1960s into the 1990s (Evans, 1995), Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* (2001). In her book, Friedan (2001) expresses her insecurity as a young teenager starting college and experienced a crisis because she did not know who she was and what she wanted. She was insecure and asked herself questions that were identity related about who she was.

Friedan (2001) claimed that despite the fact that she was awarded a graduate fellowship and could continue her education, she did not accept it. Instead she married, had children, and “lived according to the feminine mystique as a suburban housewife” (p. 70). She described her experience as a young girl in an identity crisis, what Erikson called the “identity crisis of adolescence” (p. 77). Friedan’s (2001) point is that the identity crisis has been recognized in boys, but not in girls, and her question is why? Her view is that women are not expected to grow up and to find out who they are, to choose their “human

identity” (p. 79). She quotes Erikson when she states that “in some periods of his history, and in some phases of his life cycle, man needs a new ideological orientation as surely and sorely as he must have air and food” (p. 76). Friedan stressed that women had to look for new identities (other than being housewives and taking care of children) and she claimed that the feminists were “pioneering on the front edge of women’s evolution” (p. 81). These women had to “prove that woman was not a passive, empty mirror, not a frilly, useless decoration, not a mindless animal, not a thing to be disposed by others, incapable of a voice in her own existence, before they could ever begin to fight for the rights women needed to become human equals of men” (p. 81).

The essence in Friedan’s (2001) book is that the women’s needs were different than what they (women) wished for. They performed in roles as housewives and caretakers of children but felt that something was missing and that their potential as human beings was limited. They started to raise their voices to express what they wanted, “becoming aware of an identity crisis in their own lives” (p. 79) as a result of that crisis.

Gilligan (1993) claimed that listening to women’s voices and “bringing in women’s lives” (p. xi) changed her perspective about how the human story is told.

Gilligan’s (1993) view is shared by other researchers and theorists. There are numerous discussions among theorists and researchers about how identity and identity formation are viewed in terms of gender and whether there is a difference between women and men. From the standpoint of Belenky, Clinchy Goldberger, and Tarule (1997), women have been nearly absent as theorists in the social sciences and therefore are also absent in creating their own history about women’s lives.

Central to studies made by women is the critique that women's voices have not been heard (Belenky et al., 1997; Gilligan, 1993; Josselson, 1987; Levinson, 1996). According to Belenky et al. (1997), findings from studies on identity formation have been generalized from men to women, which is neither appropriate nor sufficient. The stereotyping of women's thinking is accepted as emotional, intuitive, and personalized and has contributed to a devaluation of women's minds and experiences from their point of view (1997). They go further, and argue that especially in models of intellectual development, male experiences have been used.

Gilligan (1993) is concerned about the separation of the female self and what she calls the relational connection between voice and self. If there is a separation, in other words a disconnection between voice and self, it can result in women leaving out their voice and also themselves. Gilligan defines *voice* as "something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self" (p. xvi). She argued that she learned that voice is relational, in other words, speaks within a relationship. One could say that the woman's voice is "expanded or restricted by relational ties" (Gilligan, 1993, p. xvi).

Gilligan points to three studies throughout her book. One study of a group of college student explored identity and moral development in the early years by relating the view of self and relating morality to experiences of moral conflict and making life choices. The second group of college students formed the abortion decision study, which considered the relation between experience and thought and the role of conflict in development. The third group formed the rights and responsibility study, which has a sample of males and females.

In Gilligan's study, all the women described their identity as defined in the context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care (p. 160). Furthermore, she claimed that her research indicates that "the concept of identity expands to include the experience of interconnection" (p. 173).

To understand women's identity formation, there is a need to understand multiple aspects of women's lives. Assumptions about what is truth, and understanding of reality, shape an individual's worldview and hence her identity, according to Belenky et al. (1997). The goal of Belenky et al.'s research is to gain more knowledge about how women view their own identity formation.

In her book *Finding Herself: Pathways to Identity Development in Women*, Josselson (1987) provided insight into the identity formation of a group of college-educated women. She engaged in understanding the experiences of "normal" women and in doing so provided new insight into identity formation in women. When Josselson (1987) referred to "normal" individuals, she described them as nonpatients. In her capacity as a psychologist, she claimed that the usual classification schemes were not useful, because they consist of various theoretical yardsticks that are used to measure and evaluate individual's problematic lives. She emphasized that instead she had to use ordinary descriptive words to portray the experiences of "normal" women as they related to their identity formation. In the same way, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) claimed that it is much easier to identify disease and count victims than it is to characterize and document health.

Josselson (1987) argued that a major source of information about women has been from the perspectives of clinical psychologists and psychoanalysts, meaning that they look at the problems that trouble individuals and less at the factors that "make for harmonious

adjustment” (p. 9). In addition, she claimed that the women she discussed in her book defined themselves as not having such problems and reported that they were content with their lives, even though their lives differed from each other in terms of the choices they had made. Josselson (1987) was concerned with the formation of women’s identities because it is within the realm of identity formation that a woman bases her sense of *who she is*, as well as her vision of the structure of her life. She argued that identity incorporates a woman’s choices for herself, her priorities, and the guiding principles by which she makes her decisions. She looked at differences between women and women, not differences between women and men, because, she claimed, the easiest thing to do in psychology is to find differences between women and men.

Josselson’s book is a contribution that provided additional information about “normal” women’s experiences on their journey in life. By doing so, she expanded the knowledge about women’s identity formation. Further support for this knowledge was articulated by Gilligan (1993) when she claimed that bringing women and women’s lives into history changed the voice of how the human story is told.

Women’s Identity, Women’s Issues, and Human Resource Development

There are few studies on women in the HRD literature, and even fewer on women in leadership, and a dearth on women’s development. Furthermore, it has been difficult to find any on identity formation of women on their journey to leadership positions in corporate America, even more particularly in the Gulf Coast area. In one study about executive women and corporate culture, Bierema (1996) claimed that “women development is an ongoing process that requires awareness and attention” (p. 162). Bierema (2002) later argued that HRD needs more literature about women and women’s

experiences, particularly in the corporate setting. In addition, Bierema and Cseh (2003) put forth that HRD researchers “must explore the assumptions underlying their research, consider the beneficiaries of research, reflect on areas yet unexplored, and question the value of HRD research according to its impact on theory, practice, organizations, communities, and employees” (p. 7). They underscore this point in their call for more research on women, and by women. They further point out that woman’s voices are not heard because they are not included in the “debate.” Hence, argued Bierema (2002), research grounded in personal experiences of women’s lives should be encouraged, and so should a range of different research methods.

A definition of HRD provided by Swanson and Holton (2001) is that “HRD is a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personal training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p. 4). This definition promised “unleashing human expertise” and development, both for the individual and for the organization. One of the core beliefs in HRD is that organizations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise to establish and achieve goals; there is also an acknowledgement of organizations as changeable and vulnerable (Swanson & Holton, 2001). One such example of how organizations have changed is in the make up of the labor force, close to half of which was reported in 2008 to be female (DOL, 2009). According to Swanson and Holton (2001), making an improvement is a core motivator for HRD. Moreover, they claimed that “the improvement ideas of making positive change, attaining expertise, developing excellent quality, and making things better are central to HRD” (p. 15). Bierema and Cseh (2003) claimed that there is still much work to be done in this regard.

Some of the literature in HRD that include women, minorities, and diversity show that Bierema and Cseh's (2003) statement is still valid. However, there are some studies in HRD literature about women's careers, diversity, and minorities. Hite (2004) found in her study about career opportunities that women of color reported less access to specific career development opportunities than did their white counterparts. Russ-Eft, Dickinson, and Levine (2008) examined career success of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who were a minority or a woman. Young, Cady, and Foxon (2006) discussed mentoring as important in career development and how to execute efficient mentoring. They suggested that to do so require an understanding of the relationship dynamics and how gender influences those dynamics. Byrd (2009) examined leadership experiences of African American women in predominantly white organizations.

In regard to gender and sex in the workplace, there is some more recent literature. In an editorial, Gedro (2007) examined the challenge the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) faces in dealing with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers. Gedro suggested that by discussing difficult issues that concern LGBT, the organization will mature and evolve. Brooks and Edwards (2009) discussed the importance of LGBT persons and their allies in the workplace, Kormanik (2009) examined awareness of sexual diversity within the workplace, and Gedro (2009) discussed career development and issues related to LGBT.

In a feminist poststructuralist analysis of HRD, Metcalfe (2008) argued that HRD should be viewed as an embodied, responsive, and complex process that involves critiquing situated selves and practices (p. 459). Bierema (2009) critiqued HRD dominant masculine rationality in her article. One of her concerns is that HRD does not fulfill the

role of “humanistically facilitating development and change” (p. 69). She claimed that HRD identifies with masculine attributes like “being strong, mechanical, assertive, objective and controlled” (p. 69). She is concerned that the masculine rationality “silences other voices, particularly more feminist ones” (p. 70). Bierema (2009) stressed that if the field of HRD is going to develop “in a multifaceted manner,” then HRD must open up to debate and welcome multiple conflicting understandings of it” (p. 71).

From a HRD perspective, research on women in leadership positions and their identity formation should be of value. A comprehensive literature search in HRD journals and Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) proceedings (1998,1999,2002, 2004) indicates that little information exists about women and their identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. Most of the literature that does exist in HRD on topics such as CEOs and top managers are of general interest and not specifically about women’s identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. Bierema and Cseh (2003) evaluated 600 AHRD papers from 1996 through 2000 and claimed that “nearly absent from literature are studies with women and diverse peoples experiences” (p. 3). Even if there is more research lately in regard to women’s issues and women’s experiences, there are still many areas that need to be explored further in the field of HRD. With the literature concerning the multiple aspects of women’s lives as a backdrop, the next section will provide a discussion on E. H. Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development after an introduction of Erik Homburger Erikson.

An Introduction to Erik Homburger Erikson

Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994) was born in Germany to a Danish mother, Karla (Friedman, 1999). He came to Vienna in 1927 and completed training analysis with

Anna Freud (daughter of Sigmund Freud). He became skilled in the field of child analysis and finished a teaching degree (Friedman, 1999). Erikson, claimed Young-Bruehl (1988), taught by a method that was called the project method, a method that Anna Freud had used when she was a teacher. This method grew out of “J. Dewey’s theory that children learn best when their interest is fully engaged and centered” (p. 178).

According to Friedman (1999), Erikson’s brilliant ideas during his time in Vienna were about to be “tested and amplified during a new career as a psychoanalyst” (p. 57). He was on his way to becoming Erik Erikson, *identity’s architect*, as Friedman called him.

Erikson’s daughter argued that “Dad was the first, in fact, to propose that adulthood could be conceptualized in terms of stages of development, just as childhood had been by earlier theorists as Freud” (Bloland, 2005, p. 150). In the preface to *Adulthood*, Graubard (1978) stated “the problem is to develop analytic procedures that will make the study of *adulthood* as common as the study of *childhood*. Indeed the greatest need may be to relate the two” (p. vii).

Erikson was a male in a female world, according to Friedman’s (1999) biography about Erikson. “Within the larger psychoanalytic community, this meant that he was heavily involved in the preponderantly female world of education and child analysis, but not exclusively so” (p. 74). During Erikson’s tenure in Vienna, where he worked with Anna Freud, the Vienna school became the world center in child analysis. At the same time, Anna Freud worked on what became *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, which furnished theoretical and practical grounding for work with children (Friedman, 1999, p. 75). “Erik therefore regarded his contact with Anna Freud at the core of his analytic training” (p. 75). Furthermore, Friedman (1999) claimed that Erikson also expressed joy in

the adventurous work they did. It seems like, according to Friedman (1999), Anna Freud deepened Erikson's view of the importance of factors from society that surrounded children in having an impact on them. Friedman (1999) provides three elements in connection to the child where Anna Freud had an impact on him.

(1) "A child could not develop a true transference relationship with his analyst. The child's relationship with parents and family was too concrete for the child to internalize their images and to project (transfer) those images onto the analyst." Anna Freud urged Erikson and other trainees instead to "explore the meaning of the child's behavior and feelings" (p. 76).

(2) Anna Freud also was of that opinion that improvement of the social context "outer world" would enhance the child's "inner world." "Erikson took specific note of these social reforms and was especially impressed by Anna's readiness to feed undernourished child patients during analytic sessions" (p. 76).

(3) She emphasized that Erikson and other trainees should focus on the ego rather than the id and that "the ego operated in the course of normal child development" (p. 76). Erikson was concerned about the meaning of *identity*. Erikson had tried to find meaning in his own existence or identity "all along" (p. 95). Erikson did not know who his father was: "My father never did learn the identity of his father," stated his daughter (Bloland, 2005, p. 52). This, claimed Friedman (1999), was a problem for Erikson, because, according to Freud, "the Oedipus complex, where the son engaged and contested the father, was fundamental to the psychoanalytic worldview" (p. 95). According to Erikson's daughter (Bloland, 2005), her father had fantasies about the identity of his real father and this concern was a part of Erikson's emotional life into his adulthood. Because Erikson did

not know his father, he became more interested in identity than the oedipal issue, due to his search for self-discovery. Friedman (1999) states that this journey of Erikson “was an inquiry that he had to make largely on his own” (p. 95).

Erikson’s analyst was a woman, Anna Freud, and she had a big influence on him according to Friedman (1999). Erikson (1968) claimed that identity formation is a process whereby the individual “judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them” (p. 22). Thus, identity formation results from many different elements in an individual’s life. Erikson (1980) gave us an interesting glimpse into what these elements might be.

From the autobiography of G. Bernard Shaw, Erikson revealed the impact that the man who gave Shaw’s mother music lessons had on Shaw at that time and later in his life. Shaw said the following about his mother’s music teacher: “At first his ideas astonished us. He said that people should sleep with their windows open. The daring of this appealed to me; and I have done so ever since. He ate brown bread instead of white: a startling eccentricity” (1980, p. 114). Using this quote from Shaw’s biography, Erikson showed the impact that even small episodes can have on a person’s identity formation. From this introduction about Erikson, the next section presents and discusses Erikson’s theory.

Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson (1985) explained the development of the healthy individual through eight ages (or stages) of man. The individual has to pass each stage; in addition, society and the social environment have to *meet* the individual’s need at a particular stage. One could say that the first four stages belong to childhood and the next four to adolescence and the

young and old adult. The theory lists, for every stage of development, a crisis or a conflict. This crisis or conflict is a challenge for the individual, a challenge that the individual hopefully manages and by so doing goes to the next developmental challenge. Erikson's (1985) theory builds on the fact that if one stage has not been completed, those challenges can be expected to reappear as problems in the future.

"The first four phases pertain to childhood, the fifth to adolescence, and the last three to adulthood," according to Katchadourian (1978, p. 50). Furthermore, he claimed that "at each phase, components from each of the eight major tasks are present simultaneously as precursors, derivatives, and as the decisive crisis itself." Therefore, he claimed that it is not possible to discuss any of Erikson's phases in isolation. In other words, "childhood does not end nor adulthood begins with adolescence. Rather, the adult is anticipated in the child and the child persists in the adult" (p. 51).

In the search for identity development in women on their journey to leadership positions, questions about identity itself and the factors that impact identity formation need to be addressed. How can terms such as *identity* and *development* be understood and explained? One definition of *identity* provided by *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (2007) is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. The term *develop* is defined by *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (1992) as what is possible to the species and potential to the individual. When Erikson (1968) used the term *identity formation*, he argued that the context has to be considered in the process of the individual's growth.

Furthermore, he argued that this developmental process is a process going on inside the individual at the same time as the individual deals with what is going on outside of himself or herself. Erikson (1968) claimed that the historical context or environment

impacts the individual's development on the inside. He used the term *development* to refer to an individual's growth but claimed that the inclusion of cultural conditions as factors of identity development tend to be more of a process of identity formation.

From his point of view, he stated that the term *identity* “expresses a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (1980, p. 109). However, identity is never established as something fixed or unchangeable (Erikson, 1968); identity is not a property that an individual achieves. Rather, it is an ongoing process within an individual during a lifetime. “Identity is never established as an achievement in the form of personality armor, or anything static and unchangeable,” claimed Erikson (p. 24), who also described the process of identity development as one of identity formation.

In Erikson's explanation of the development of the healthy individual through eight ages (or stages) of man, he described the development or the growth of an individual from “the point of view of the conflicts, inner and outer, which the healthy personality weathers, emerging and re-emerging with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity to do well, according to the standards of those who are significant to him” (1980, p. 52). To provide a definition of *healthy personality*, he refers to Marie Jahoda's (1950) definition: “a healthy personality actively masters his environment, shows a certain unity of personality, and is able to perceive the world and himself correctly” (p. 53).

Erikson (1985) argued that not all development is a series of crises, but that all psychosocial development proceeds by critical steps. He used the term *critical* “about being a characteristic of turning points, of moments of decision between progress and

regression, integration and retardation” (1985, pp. 270-271). Moreover, identity is never established as something unchangeable, according to Erikson (1968). Identity is an ongoing process within an individual and the individual’s social context. In the following section, the eight stages of Erikson’s (1985) psychosocial development theory will be presented. Katchadourian stated that each stage in Erikson’s theory is based on “specific tasks and follows a general chronology without being linked to specific, arbitrary *age limits*” (p. 50).

Basic Trust Versus Basic Mistrust (Birth to 18 months)

Erikson (1985) explained that the first demonstration of social trust in the baby is the ease of his feeding, the depth of his sleep, and the relaxation of his bowels. As the child spends more time awake, he will find more adventures of the senses arousing a feeling of familiarity. When the infant lets his mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage, it is because the child has developed more of an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability. Erikson (1985) claimed that such consistency, continuity, and sameness of experience provide a rudimentary sense of ego identity. This experience is related to the recognition of an inner certainty of remembered and anticipated sensations within the child and images that are related with the outer population of familiar and predictable situations and people.

Erikson (1980) stressed the quality of the maternal relationship. The baby’s personal needs give the child a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their culture’s lifestyle. The interaction between the mother and child creates the “basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine as sense of being all right, of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become” (p. 65).

He also argued that “the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experiences does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love, but rather on quality of the maternal relationship” (1985, p. 249).

He goes further and claims that the parents must provide to the child “a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what they do and why” (p. 65). By providing this trust, the children can endure frustration if it leads to an experience of greater sameness and stronger continuity of development toward a final integration of the child individual’s life. Erikson (1985) argued that children do not become neurotic from frustration but from the lack of societal meaning in these frustrations. Erikson (1985) shows us how that basic trust must maintain itself through life. Each of the eight stages in his theory has a special relation to one of the basic elements of society. The reason for this, he claims, “is that the human life cycle and man’s institutions have evolved together” (p. 250). Erikson (1980) claimed that the term *basic* does not mean that this component is “especially conscious” (p. 57) in the early years or later in adulthood. He explains basic trust as an “attitude toward oneself and the world derived from the experiences of the first year of life (p. 57). Nevertheless, when the criteria are developed in childhood and integrated in adulthood, they become a part of the individual’s total personality.

Autonomy Versus Shame and Doubt (18 Months to 3 Years)

According to Erikson (1985), this is the stage where the child will strive for independence and will discover that he is a separate individual, and not attached excessively to his caregiver. In other words, the child begins to develop a *boundary* of where he or she *begins* and *ends* in relation to the caregiver. Otherwise, the child might become *enmeshed* in the caregiver.

Erikson (1980) explained that from a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of autonomy and pride. Conversely, from a sense of muscular and anal impotence, there can develop loss of self-control. Furthermore, excessive parental control leads to a lasting sense of doubt and shame. Shame, claimed Erikson (1980), is an infantile emotion and it “supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at in a word, self-conscious” (p. 71). In other words, the child is being exposed in a way for which it is not ready. Shame develops with the child’s self-consciousness and Erikson (1985) claimed that the significance of this stage lies in the maturation of the muscle system. Shame develops if autonomy is not developed adequately. When carried over into adulthood, such infantile shame can be a devastating obstacle of maturity.

Outer control, claimed Erikson (1985), must be firmly reassuring at this stage. The infant must come to feel that the basic faith in existence, which is the lasting treasure saved from the rages of the oral stage, will not be jeopardized by this about-face of his, this sudden violent wish to have a choice, to demand appropriately, and to eliminate stubbornly. According to Erikson (1985), shame is early expressed in, for example, burying one’s face, and it is an infantile emotion. He states further that shame is actually rage turned against the self. The child does not want anyone to look at him, to notice his exposure. A sense of rightful dignity and lawful independence in relation to the adults around him gives to the child of good will the confident expectation that the kind of autonomy fostered in childhood will not lead to undue doubt or shame in later life.

Initiative Versus Guilt (3 to 5 Years)

Erikson (1985) described this stage of development as a stage where new hope and responsibility are constituted. The child has a surplus of energy. He forgets failures quickly and approaches new and more accurate directions. The child is learning to master the world around him. The child knows that he is a separate person, but, argued Erikson (1980), he must find out what kind of a person he is. The child wants to execute his decisions, and if they do not produce the results he desired and gets parental approval, the child feels guilty.

This is also the time for development of morality. The child needs help to balance the sense of guilt in a way, such that self-control is encouraged. It is important that the child develops a sense of satisfaction, which is essential for executing continued initiative. At this stage, children need goals that are achievable and appreciated by the *mirroring* parents. This stage, according to Erikson (1985), sets the “direction toward the possible and the tangible” (p. 258) and in so doing admits dreams from early childhood to be connected to the purpose of an active adult life.

Industry Versus Inferiority (5 to 12 or 13 Years)

At this stage, the individual seems set “for entrance into life” according to Erikson (1985, p. 258). The child now learns to win recognition by producing things. Erikson (1980) claimed that this is the time when the child wants to get busy with something and with others. The motto for this stage is: “I am what I learn” (Erikson, 1980, p. 87). If the child experiences little success, it will develop a sense of inferiority or incompetence. If the child is not allowed to be a child, it leads to narrow virtuosity.

In all cultures, claimed Erikson (1985), children receive some systematic instruction, and in this way they develop skills and in so doing become ready to act on their social environment. The danger of this stage lies in a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. Children need to experience success and want to be good, but at the same time they can be rebellious and disobedient.

If the child despairs of his skills or of his status among his peers, he may be discouraged from identification with them and with the section of the peer group. To lose the hope of such industrial association may pull him back to the more isolated, less tool-conscious familiar rivalry of the oedipal stage. “Many a child’s development is disrupted when family life has failed to prepare him for school life, or when school life fails to sustain the promise of earlier stages” (p. 260).

Identity Versus Role Confusion (12 to 18 Years)

In this stage, childhood comes to an end and puberty and youth begins. With that, claimed Erikson (1980), all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are now questioned. This is because the body and mind are changing rapidly. At this time, says Erikson (1980), there is an integration taking place in the form of ego identity and it “is more than the sum of the childhood identification” (p. 94). He goes on to say, “It is the inner capital accrued from all those experiences of each successive stage, when meaningful identification led to a successful alignment of the individual basic drives with his endowment and his opportunities.” This is the time where the individual is ready to commit to another person and, on the other hand, also can bear isolation. In other words, he or she is able to be rejected. At this stage, the individual prepares for what is coming later in life, being committed to persons, ideals, and an occupation while not feeling trapped by these

commitments. Erikson emphasizes the importance of “meaning it” and sincerity in one’s choices as opposed to a hollow feeling of “faking it” (Erikson, 1962).

In their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, adolescents have to re-fight many of the battles of earlier years, even though to do so they must artificially appoint perfectly well-meaning people to play the roles of adversaries; they are ready to install lasting idols as guardians of a final identity. The primary danger in this stage is role confusion. Erikson (1985) gives an example of adolescent love as an attempt to “arrive at a definition of one’s identity by projecting one’s diffused ego image on another and by seeing it thus reflected and gradually clarified” (p. 262). And he goes on to explain that this is why young love is *conversation*. The individual’s mind is at this stage, states Erikson (1985), the mind of the moratorium, “a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood and between the moralities learned by the child and the ethics to be developed by the adult” (p. 263).

Intimacy Versus Isolation (18 to 35 Years)

The young adult is ready to “commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises” (Erikson, 1985, p. 263). Erikson (1985) explains that the young adult has to take risks and face the fear of losing within situations such as friendships and love. “Body and ego must now be masters of the organ modes and of the nuclear conflicts, in order to be able to face the fear of loss in situations which call for self-abandon: in sexual unions, in close friendships and in physical combat” (p. 264). To avoid such experiences of fear, which may link to ego loss, the

individual may choose the path of a deep sense of isolation and “consequent self-absorption” (p. 264).

Erikson (1985) points to the strength that is acquired at any stage is “tested by the necessity to transcend it in such a way that the individual can take chances in the next stage with was most vulnerable precious in the previous one” (p. 263). The counterpart of intimacy is isolation, which means, according to Erikson (1985), “the avoidance of contacts which commit to intimacy” (p. 266). He continued to say that it can lead to the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own and whose territory seems to encroach the extent of one’s intimate relations.

To complete the stage of intimacy versus isolation, Erikson (1985) claimed that “A human being should be potentially able to accomplish mutuality of genital orgasm, but he should also be so constituted as to bear a certain amount of frustrations in the matter without undue regression wherever emotional preference or considerations of duty and loyalty call for it” (p. 265).

Generativity Versus Stagnation (35 to 55 or 60 Years)

The concept of generativity, explains Erikson (1985), “is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 267). And he argued further that generativity is “intimately related to the seventh criterion of mental health, which concerns parenthood” (Erikson, 1980, p. 103). It involves the upbringing and concerns of the next generation. The healthy person feels that he or she is creating and producing ideas, ideals, affection, and respect in the spheres of love and work. He or she is doing something good for the future. By contrast, failure at this stage leads to a sense of stagnation or of merely

marking time by going through relationships and jobs without a sense of emotional satisfaction.

This is the stage where sometimes “regression to an obsessive need for pseudo-intimacy takes place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation and personal impoverishment” (p. 267). This, he claimed, one can see if individuals “begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own, or one another’s, one and only child; and where conditions favor it, early invalidism, physical or psychological, becomes the vehicle of self-concern” (p. 267).

Erikson (1985) explains that the fact that parents have children “does not achieve generativity” (p. 267). He goes on and claimed that young parents sometimes suffer from the “retardation of the ability to develop this stage” (p. 267). This lack of the ability to develop at this stage, he claimed, has to do with early childhood, “in excessive self-love based on a too strenuously self-made personality” (p. 267) and in the “lack of some faith, some belief in the species” (p. 267).

Ego Integrity Versus Despair (From 60 Years)

Erikson (1985) claimed that this is the stage of ego integrity. He explains this term as follows:

“It is the ego’s accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning. It is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego, not of the self as an experience which conveys some world order and spiritual sense, no matter how dearly paid for. It is the acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions: it thus means a new, a different love of one’s parents” (p. 268).

According to Erikson (1980), only the one who has taken care of “things and people, and had adapted himself to triumphs and disappointments of being, by necessity, the originator of others and the generator of things and ideas, only he may gradually grow the fruits of the seven stages” (p. 104). His point about ego integrity is described as follows: “Ego integrity, therefore, implies an emotional integration which permits participation by followership as well as acceptance of the responsibility of leadership: both must be learned and practiced in religion and in politics, in the economic order and in technology, in aristocratic living, and in the arts and sciences” (p. 105).

It is a stage where “an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history; and that for him all human integrity stands or falls with one style of integrity of which he partakes” (p. 268). He continues: “The style of integrity developed by his culture or civilization thus becomes the ‘patrimony of his soul,’ the seal of his moral paternity of himself” (p. 268). Erikson (1985) finishes this last of his stages with the sentence: “It seems possible to further paraphrase the relation of adult integrity and infantile trust by saying that healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death (p. 269).

Erikson (1963, 1980, 1968) has, according to Marcia and Friedman (1970), devoted only one article to women’s ego identity. In the chapter “Womanhood and the Inner Space,” Erikson (1968) discussed the need for a “redefinition of the identity of the sexes within a new image of man” (p. 261). He discussed the identity formation of boys and girls in regard to biological differences and in the light of historical and cultural context (The Guidance Study of the University of California, p. 268). Erikson claimed that in discussing sex differences in men and women, it does not make sense to not include “their many-

sided personalities, their special conflicts, and their complex life histories” (p. 282).

Erikson (1968) states that “for a human being, in addition to having a body, is *somebody*, which means an indivisible personality and a defined member of a group” (p. 285). This statement provides his views on an individual’s identity formation. If you are a man or a woman, every human being has opportunities, limitations and a personality, everybody is *somebody*. Regardless of ideals and thinking, “Anatomy, history and personality are our combined destiny” according to Erikson (1968, p. 285). Erikson also claimed in his essay about *womanhood and the inner space* that:

“there will be many difficulties in a new joint adjustment of the sexes to changing conditions, but they do not justify prejudices which keep half of mankind from participating in planning and decision making, especially at time when the other half, by its competitive escalation and acceleration of technological progress, has brought us and our children to the gigantic brink on which we live, with all our affluence” (p. 293).

Erikson stated this several decades ago and it seems that it still reflects the truth, even today. Marcia and Friedman (1970) presented in their study: *Ego identity status in college women*, a first step in exploring ego identity in women. They built their view on Erikson (1968), who focused on a woman’s productive “inner space” (p. 266) in the identity formation of non-neurotic women where they focus on women’s “presence of built-in life support systems” (p. 249). Marcia and Friedman (1970) claimed that how a woman defines herself, “taking into account the demands and potentials of her biological structure, constitutes an essential aspect of the ego-identity problem for woman” (p. 1). Marcia and Friedman (1970) claimed that their study was the first step to apply ego-identity constructs

to college women, initially validated with college men (Marcia, 1966). *Ego-identity status* is a term applied by Marcia and provides four ways of coping with the adolescent identity crisis described by Erikson. According to Marcia and his colleagues, the balance between identity and confusion lies in the making of commitment to an identity. The four ways of identity statuses are as follows: *identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusions*.

Identity achievement occurs when an individual has gone through an exploration of different identities and made a commitment to one. Moratorium is the status of a person who is actively involved in exploring different identities but has not made a commitment, foreclosure status where a person has made a commitment without attempting identity exploration and during which they are vulnerable to self-esteem manipulation and approval seeking. Finally, identity diffusion occurs when there is neither an identity crisis nor commitment. Researchers have found that those who have made a strong commitment to an identity tend to be happier than those who have not. Those with a status of identity diffusions tend to feel out of place in the world and do not pursue a sense of identity.

Sorell and Montgomery (2001) stated that “narrative approaches should replace the much-used status approach developed by Marcia” (1966), because narrative approaches preserve individual distinctiveness rather than averaging it” (p. 106).

They furthermore critiqued Erikson theory from a feminist standpoint in their article, “feminist perspectives on Erikson’s theory.” Of their concern is Erikson’s emphasize on biology as a factor in of psychosocial development and the emphasizing on masculine points of view. However, they claimed, “the theory’s focus on identity development as a lifelong psychosocial process is as useful today as it was when Erikson published *Childhood*

and Society in 1950” (p. 108). Friedman (1999) stated that “Erikson not only left us with abundant ideas and reflections of his own, but he urged friends, colleagues, and students to continuously generate new thoughts of their own” (p. 476).

Summary of the Review of Literature

In this literature review I have presented views on different aspects of women’s lives and discussed views on *what is a woman?* Literature representing feminists’ views on identity and identity formation have been discussed. HRD and women’s issues have had light shed on them, and, finally, a presentation of Erikson, the identity’s architect (Friedman, 1999), has been provided and discussed.

The work on identity formation of women by feminists is an extension of understanding the human identity formation. In Bloland’s book (2005), *In the Shadow of Fame*, she reveals how her father was bewildered by the critique from feminists that claimed that his developmental theories were more accurate in describing the life cycle of men than that of women. The critique was based on his emphasis on the masculine values of separation and independence compared to the more relational orientation of women. She stated, “Dad was always somewhat bewildered by this critique, believing that he was himself a feminist” (p. 137).

Erikson is, according to Josselson (1987) and Sorell and Montgomery (2001), our most important theorist on identity.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research study is a qualitative study that seeks to understand and interpret the identity formation of three women in their experiences on their journey to leadership positions in corporations, in the Gulf Coast of the United States. In this study, the worldview is considered as “a highly subjective phenomenon that is interpreted rather than measured” (Merriam, 1991, p. 48).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that a qualitative worldview or paradigm means that it is “guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 22). They further argued that this set of beliefs contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and the methodological premises, which guided action in the research process. These beliefs regarding what kind of being is the human being and what is the nature of reality (ontology), and what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known (epistemology) are all beliefs that shape the researcher’s world view or paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

This chapter outlines an understanding of what qualitative research is and how this study is situated within this particular context. The sources for this chapter are multiple. However, Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) book, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, has been of great assistance in understanding the phenomenon and complexity of qualitative research. As a method of collecting and analyzing empirical material, Chase (2005) has helped to guide me in “treating the women’s interview as narratives” (p. 651). Furthermore, she also pointed at today “narrative inquiry in the social sciences is flourishing” (p. 651), which I experienced. I struggled between organizing the texts

according to themes, events, some significant events in the women's lives, or a narrative about their lives. However, they all represent "an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them," as stated by Chase (2005, p. 651).

Kuhn (1996) claimed that, "Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice" (p. 11). In qualitative research, the emphasis is on processes and meanings over quantity, intensity, and frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To seek meaning for me meant that I tried, to the best of my ability, to listened to and understand what the women in this study were telling me and used my understanding to make their experience understandable to others. Similar to statements by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997), I tried to listened *for* a story, not *to* a story.

I understand the world similarly to that of Merriam's perspective (1991). She argued that the worldview or paradigm in qualitative research is perceived as always changing and focusing on the process whereby the new perspectives are constructed and new knowledge developed. She also stated that in interpretive research, understanding the meaning of the experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, theory-generating mode of inquiry (Merriam, 2001). Induction, explained Meacham (2007), is often "associated with empiricism the idea that the source of all knowledge is to be found in experience" (p. 4).

To conduct this study, I needed to be involved in the research process, which meant I had to use myself as the instrument of data gathering (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). I tried to get as close as possible to the participants, similar to Creswell's (2007) statement, "With the epistemological assumption, conducting a qualitative study means that

researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (p. 18). To use myself as a primary instrument to gather data may seem problematic; however, Virginia Olsen (in Danzin & Lincoln, 2000) used Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ quote and discussed “the natural self.” The use of self as the primary instrument does not have to be troublesome, she claimed, but rather can be viewed as a set of resources.

By using myself to gather data, I cannot keep a distance from the women being interviewed and, in so doing, be value free and objective. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that the time of researchers doing research by engaging in value-free inquiry is over. From the start of this study, I have had a worldview that is explained by Schwandt (2001) as being more than empirical observations; it is also about the scientists’ *worldview* or *conceptual perspective*, “that determines which questions are worth investigating and which answers are acceptable” (p. 279). In fact, this research is also a journey for the researcher, similar to the traveler metaphor used by Kvale (1996) to describe the role of the researcher in this kind of research.

As a qualitative researcher, I am concerned about the other individual’s point of view and perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claimed that “qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor’s perspective through detailed interviewing and observations” (p. 10). Through detailed interviewing and observation, new perspectives and knowledge are constructed and developed claimed Merriam (2001). My purpose as a researcher is beginning a new story based on the interviewees’ stories. When qualitative research is conducted, the researcher embraces the idea of multiple realities according to Creswell (2007).

The research focused upon multiple truths and on different perspectives of reality. As the phenomenon is investigated, it is more likely to diverge than to converge, according to Guba and Lincoln (1981). In addition, Denzin and Lincoln, (2005, p. 21) claimed that “there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of and between the observer and the observed.” Furthermore, they continued and claimed that what individuals can do is to offer “accounts, or stories about what they have done and why ... and therefore no single method can grasp all the subtle variations in ongoing human experience” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21).

As a qualitative researcher, I am situated in a tradition where “these traditions locate the researcher in history, simultaneously guiding and constraining the work that is done in any specific study” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). This statement by Denzin and Lincoln suggested a relationship between the actor and the context. These views are also expressed by Erikson (1968) and Riesman (2001).

In this study, three women in leadership positions were interviewed in a face-to-face situation in a setting of their choice. And as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argued, I am at that point located within a context that has certain boundaries that are guiding my work. The women in this study offered me their “stories about what they had done and why” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). Geiger (1986) claimed that oral narratives include everything from formal oral histories to focused interviews and surveys. To understand these women’s stories, I developed an interview protocol that was broad:

- (1) I inquired into their experiences of identity formation on their journeys to their leadership position.
- (2) I inquired into critical points in their lives during their journey.

(3) I inquired into their achievements during their journey.

(4) I inquired into the sacrifices they made to become successful.

Encouraged by gaining data from a “variety of ways” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 81), I had a subsection of four open-ended areas of inquiry designed to obtain the depth of the information I needed; the areas are described next (Appendix A).

(1) Background and self-description

(2) Your journey to leadership positions

(3) Gender and relations to other

(4) Conclusion (representing final questions I asked the women)

In the four open-ended areas of inquiry, I included key points from the start “leading to a story that I wanted to tell” (Kvale, 1996, p. 201). After the first interview, I modified some of the questions when I went back to interview for a second time. During the interview, I changed some of the questions I initially was thinking of asking; they were not longer necessary to ask, because the interviewee answered the question embedded within earlier responses.

The fact that I am female like the interviewees probably had an impact on the situation. Fontana and Frey (2005) discussed gender in interviewing situations and used Denzin (1989) to argue that “the sex of interviewer and the sex of the respondent make a difference because the interviews take place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones” (p. 710). Thus, the interviews became more of a conversation, as Fog (1994), Kvale (1996), and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have argued.

Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first, according to Fontana and Frey (2005). Furthermore, they argued that it “is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans” (p. 698). In this situation, asking questions and getting answers was more than a regular conversation; it was a research interview with a purpose.

In the book *Med Samtalen Som Udgangspunkt (With Conversation as a Starting Point)*, Fog (1994) discussed questions in regard to what she calls the qualitative research conversation, in other words a conversation with a purpose. The content of the book makes the reader look at one's self and reflect on different issues. Fog (1994) questions the reasons for selecting the interview as a tool to get the information that is needed. She questions the researcher's capability or capacity to understand the interviewee and the intention when using or interpreting the material in regard to reliability and validity. She inquires into the researcher's ability to recognize how intention in the conversation from the researcher's point of view is connected to validity and reliability. The researcher's conversation is both similar to and different from daily conversation between two people. It is similar because it is a common way to get information from one's fellow man, and it is different because one of the participants is especially interested in the information expressed in the interview or conversation. However, as Fontana and Frey (2005) argued, “Interviews are interactional encounters and the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge generated” (p. 699).

In this social dynamic situation, there must be openness between those involved and there must be room for mutual reflection. The research interview process is therefore

a process that is relational. To study experiences “is a matter of people in relation, contextually and temporally,” said Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 189; cited by Dewey).

As I moved from field texts to research texts, I am at the point where Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 130) stated that “our field texts are the texts of which we ask questions of meaning and significance.” Furthermore, they said that it is the question of meaning and social significance that in the end shapes the field text into the analysis and interpretation parts of our work. Similarly, Hendry (2007) stated that she found that it was not the stories told that were most important, but rather the meanings that were highlighted by those particular stories.

My experience during the interview process was similar to what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call a *process of fluidity*. They explained that a “researcher’s personal, private, and professional lives flow across the boundaries into the research site; likewise, though often not with the same intensity, participant’s lives flow the other way” (p. 115). I noted during my conversations with the three women that they could become silent or distant, and it seemed that something in our conversations triggered this silence. “Silences possess significant meanings,” stated Charmaz (2005), and she claimed that it may appear when dealing with “moral choices, ethical dilemmas and just social politics” (p. 527). However, silences represent different meanings in different contexts and cultures.

In general, field texts are not constructed with reflective intent, stated Clandinin and Connelly (2000). The interviews are more descriptive, but, for the researcher, there is an ongoing internal reflection going on. As described above, when the participants sometimes became silent during the interview situation, I as the researcher wondered *what* that silence meant. I view this as an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis

in a qualitative study, as Erlandson et al. (1993) argued. As a qualitative researcher, I cannot decide *before* an interview takes place that I will delay data analysis until the interview is finished. There is an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis. In this study, I experienced my reflections during the data collection, when something in the conversations was, for example, triggered by silence. My task was to both discover and construct meaning from the field texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, “Field texts need to be reconstructed as research texts” (p. 130).

There are different approaches to reading an interview or field texts. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that, “The researcher may also read and analyze interviews or cultural texts in variety of different ways, including content, narrative and semiotic strategies” (p. 25). Chase (2005) explained that a narrative has flexible meanings. From a historical background, narratives may be (a) a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters such as an encounter with a friend, boss, or physician; (b) an extended story about a significant aspect of one’s life such as school, work, marriage, divorce, childbirth, illness, a trauma, or participation in a war or social movement; or (c) a narrative of one’s entire life, from birth to the present (p. 652). The experiences gathered from the women on their journeys to leadership positions in this study are closest to a narrative of an entire life.

Polkinghorne (2007) stated that narrative researchers can, through personal descriptions of life experiences, provide knowledge about significant areas of the human realm that are neglected. The principal intent in experience is the growth and transformation in the life stories, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

In this study, the intent was to understand identity formation in relation to Erikson (1968, 1978, 1980, and 1985), through the experiences of the three women on their journey from childhood to becoming a woman in leadership positions. The experiences of each of the women are unique and therefore not meant to be generalized to all women on their journey to leadership positions. Nevertheless, they are part of the holistic pattern of identity formation. My purpose with this research is to understand the participants' "points of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world" (Kvale, 2006, p. 481).

Sample

To attain the needed information for the study, identity formation of three women on their journey to leadership positions, purposive sampling was implemented. Purposive sampling is, according to Schwandt (2001), chosen for the relevance to the research questions and because there may be a good reason to believe "what is going on there" is critical to understand some processes (p. 232). The population of the study included three women that who had successfully reached positions of leadership in energy business corporations, located in the Gulf Coast of the United States. Even if there is research of on women and identity formation, and women in leadership, I could not find any studies that indicated women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. To gather the data necessary for this study, I had to purposively select who to sample, because all of the individuals needed to have stories to tell about their lived experience (Creswell, 2007).

To select and identify women who would represent the purpose and the scope of the study, I needed some criteria for selection:

- The participants had to be women.

- The participants had to be in leadership positions (the office or position of a leader) (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2007).
- The participants had to be willing to meet with me for face-to-face interviews.
- The participants had to be willing to tell me about their experiences.
- The participants had to be located in Texas.

Smith and Hodkinson (2005) claimed that “the lists we bring to judgment are open-ended in that we have the capacity to add items and subtract items from the list” (p. 922). This I had to do. One of the participant’s organizations was located in another state in the Gulf Coast area, thus I had to change my original set of criteria and “add” one item and “subtract” another one.

My purpose in the study was to better understand the identity formation of three women on their journeys to leadership positions in corporations in the Gulf Coast area of the United States and, by so doing, provide new understanding and meaning of their identity formation on their journey to these positions.

Data Collection Procedures

The process of interviewing the women was an exciting process. The type of purposive sampling I used was described by Merriam (2001) as *snowball sampling*. She also used *chain sampling* or *network sampling* to describe this type of purposive sampling: “This strategy involves asking each participant or group of participants to refer you to other participants” (p. 65). The implementation of the strategy in this study is explained in the following. The first participant I interviewed was identified by a mutual friend and contacted by her with information about the study, a presentation of myself, a background of my research interest, and my email address (Appendix B). I was then contacted by the

prospective interviewee by email and we exchanged more information and selected a date for our first meeting and interview. Before we started the interview, the participant read and signed the Information Sheet about this research study, reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University.

After the first interview, with the first participant, I asked the first participant if she could think of another woman in a similar position who would be interested in this study and willing to talk with me. She reacted positively to this suggestion and sent me an email within a week after our first interview with the name of another woman whom she had contacted. She was willing to meet me for an interview. We exchanged emails with each other, providing additional information to each other, and set a date for our first meeting. The second participant asked a third woman, and in that way I was able to get the three participants for the study.

All three of the participants met the criteria for this study, which is described in the subsection *Sample*. The participants were all responsive to this research study, and they shared their experiences with me and were willing to provide follow-up conversations later if I needed more information. The participants in the study were all concerned about the confidentiality of their corporation and the confidentiality of their own names. To protect the participants' privacy, they are given fictitious names (Kvale, 1996). In total, approximately 10 hours of interview material were gathered. There was much data, and Kvale (1996) discussed the complexity of transferring the conversations that are given to a specific listener, in this case me, to a written text created for a distant public. During February, March, and April 2009, I conducted a series of interviews with the participants. When I was interviewing the women, I was interested in how they viewed themselves and

their experiences in terms of identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. Questions about their experiences with identity formation on their journeys to leadership positions were asked: What did they regard as critical points during their journeys? What had they achieved on their journeys and what had they sacrificed to become successful? Only one of the participants wanted to read her interviews. The interviews were conducted and completed in the settings the women preferred. For two of the women, this was their home; for the third woman, it was my home.

In the interview situation, it is important to be aware of the context by using all senses. Thus, the context of the investigated situation, as the social world, is important for the qualitative researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) claimed that qualitative researchers believe that a “thick” description of the social world is valuable.

To gather the necessary information, thick description was used in the study to make ensure that the researcher obtained the necessary data (Erlandson et al., 1993). The purpose of thick description does not involve *quantity* but rather *quality*. Schwandt (2001, p. 255) explained the purpose of thick description in this way: it is not “simply a matter of amassing relevant detail ... it is rather to richly describe social action and interpret it by recording different perspectives of an episode as the circumstances, meanings, intentions and strategies.” I thought that the participants were very open and reflective about what they had experienced on their journeys in life.

In this study, I was the primary instrument for gathering data and therefore I would “construct reality in ways that are consistent and compatible with the constructions of a setting’s inhabitants” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). As the qualitative inquirer I was

looking for what was “unique, atypical, different, ideographic and individualistic,” as Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 129) described it.

To use oneself as the primary instrument in gathering data, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested seven characteristics of human beings as instruments in qualitative research: (1) responsiveness (the researcher’s ability to respond to environment and to individuals within the environment), (2) adaptability (researchers can adapt to change in context), (3) holistic emphasis (ability to view the world as a whole, and not as isolated parts), (4) knowledge base expansion (awareness of knowing something we are not consciously aware of), (5) processual immediacy (an ability to process data immediately when received), (6) opportunities for clarification and summarization (ability to clarify extend statements and provide a summary to the participants), and (7) opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses meant human inquires seek atypical and encourage it. Furthermore, they suggested that in qualitative research where human beings are instruments, “what is needed are those qualities that are uniquely human” (p. 151).

The three participants had different, unique stories to tell me. Merriam (2001) stated that no matter what kind of interviewing is being conducted, “the interview carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants” (p. 214). The participants can tell something they had never intended to reveal (Merriam, 2001). In this study, data, or empirical materials, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 28) preferred, were gathered by conducting in depth interviews. The process of data analysis is described in the next subsection.

Data Analysis

All the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Transcribing the text was done by the researcher, and an additional two interviews were transcribed by a person who

promised to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The process of “transcribing is the best way to listen carefully to the interview and learn its content and form,” claimed Lieblich (2006, p. 65e). “To analyze means to separate something into parts or elements,” stated Kvale (1996, p. 184). By listening to the recordings, I had a unique chance to become familiar with the interviewee and the content of the interview for a second and third time, which was essential for the analysis.

There is an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis in a qualitative study (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997). “Without realizing it, even as we describe we are engaging in analysis and interpretation,” argued Wolcott (2009, p. 29). The relationship between the data collection and data analysis was an ongoing process during the interview and observation. This process is like a circular process and involves two phases (Erlandson et al. 1993). The first phase concerns data analysis at the research site during the data collections, and the second phase concerns data analysis away from the site following a period of data collection (Erlandson et al., 1993). This latter phase referred to by Erlandson et al. (1993) is similar to the view of Price (1999), who claimed that “interpretation is seen as a higher level of abstraction, a perspective gained from a distance through reflection on what is less visible and less apparent, and in conjunction with theoretical and conceptual framework” (p. 16). Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) adds that the question the researcher always must ask of process is, “How does the interpretation that I am mounting make sense of the various parts of my experience of the subjects or site?” (p. 262).

The process of moving from the field text to research text is a complex matter, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000). These authors claimed that field texts are

“close to experience and tend to be descriptive and shaped around particular events” (p. 132). Research text is composed at a distance from field texts by the researcher and looks for “pattern, narrative threads, tension, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132).

This process of making research text is an interpretation and re-creation of the field text that makes sense and gives meaning to the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the midst of “the jungle of transcripts,” I experienced what Kvale (1996) described, as helpful. “A narrative approach to the interview analysis, going back to the original story told by the interviewee and anticipating the final story to be reported to an audience, may prevent becoming lost in a jungle of transcripts” (p. 184). In addition, Wolcott (2009) claimed that, “The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to get rid of much of the data you accumulate” (p. 39).

Trustworthiness

The most important issue when doing conducting qualitative research is to build trust-worthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) explained *trustworthiness* as the way in which the researcher can convince the audience and also oneself that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of. Trustworthiness is established by the use of techniques that provide truth through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through conformability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). To me as a researcher, it meant that I had to be as open and reflective as possible about everything that I did in the research process. Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggests: “reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the human as instrument” (p. 210).

Erlandson et al. (1993) explained *credibility* by saying that “it has the affect on its reader of a mosaic image; it can be imprecise in regard to defining boundaries, but very rich in providing depth of meaning and richness of understanding” (p. 30). *Transferability* is about how the results of the study can be applied to other contexts. Erlandson et al. (1993) claimed that a qualitative researcher would maintain that “no true generalization is really possible; all observations are defined by the specific context in which they occur” (p. 32). Furthermore, Erlandson et al., (1993) claimed that the qualitative researcher believes that *knowledge* from one context can be transferred to another context, by describing in detail “the relationships and intricacies of the context being studied” (p. 32), in other words, by using thick descriptions. Thick descriptions, according to Erlandson, et al. (1993), which the researcher generates, will make researchers from other contexts able to judge the applicability of the findings of the context. “Effective thick descriptions bring the reader vicariously into the context being described” ... “An individual whose first encounter with a setting through an effective thick description has a sense of déjà vu of actually visiting the setting” (p. 33).

Consistency, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is how one can determine that the results from a study would be repeated if the inquiry were repeated in the same context or with similar respondents. Merriam (2001) questioned if a study was repeated, would it yield the same results? Her answer is that it is problematic because human behavior is never static in social sciences. However, Williams and Morrow (2009) argued that replication in a qualitative study can mean “replication of the procedures, not necessarily of the participant sample or findings” (p. 578).

Finally, Erlandson et al. (1993) claimed that to perform a credibility check, the researcher must provide an “audit trail which provides documents on critical incidents, interview notes and a running account of the process, such as the researchers daily journal of the inquiry” (p. 34). After I finished one interview, I immediately wrote down notes in a journal of reflections. Additionally, my chairperson on the subject matter reviewed the transcripts, and we had a meeting every week and substantial discussions.

The idea of *validity*, according to Polkinghorne (2007), is in the confidence readers can have on the proposed knowledge claims. He argued further that a narrative researcher ask the readers to “make judgments on whether or not evidence and argument convinces them at the level of plausibility, credibleness or trustworthiness of the claim” (p. 477).

Ethical Issues

“No textual staging is ever innocent,” claimed Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p. 960). This statement is something I had to think about throughout this work again and again. There are several ethical issues to be concerned about as a researcher. For example, Kvale (2006) was concerned about the “neglect of domination in research interview” (p. 483). Likewise, Merriam (2001) claimed that there are several ethical issues that appear when the interviewer obtains the information he or she needs from the interviewee within a private setting. However, “Most people who agree to be interviewed enjoy sharing their knowledge, opinions, or experiences” (p. 214).

My experience is that both statements are true. In an interview setting, there is information that should remain between the participant and the researcher. “In most qualitative research, and in narrative inquiry in particular, issues of anonymity appear and reappear,” according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 174).

In the study about women and identity formation, the participants were promised anonymity for themselves and their companies. As the interviews progressed, I had an experience similar to what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claimed, namely that “issues of anonymity appear and reappear” (p. 174) and it is a concern throughout the inquiry. And as Creswell (2007) stated, the focus is on the phenomenon investigated: “the focus of all qualitative research needs to be on understanding the phenomenon being explored rather than solely on the reader, the researcher, or the participants being studied” (p. 3).

Summary of Research Procedures

As mentioned earlier, this study was also a journey for the researcher, similar to the traveler metaphor used by Kvale (1996) to describe the researcher as a traveler on a journey. “A central question revolves around which voice or voices researchers should use as they interpret and represent the voices of those they study,” stated Chase (2005, p. 652). To conduct this study, purposive and snowball samplings were used. The three participants were in positions of leadership in energy business corporations. The main intent of the study was to explore the identity formation of these women on their journey to leadership positions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter consists of the narratives of three women in leadership positions and the reflections and discussion of their identity formation on their journeys to these positions. Each of these stories is different, and as a researcher I have had the opportunity to explore something atypical, something unique, as Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated. The women in this study, to protect the participant's privacy, are given fictitious names (Kvale, 1996). Linda, Ann, and Amanda have had the competency and the ability to get around hurdles and barriers, not only throughout their careers but also in their personal lives. Their childhood, adolescence, adult life, and careers are different from each other; even so, there are also unifying threads.

The stories told about these women and their identity formation on their journeys to leadership positions are stories about them. Therefore, these stories are not a generalization about all women and their identity formation on their journeys to leadership positions but rather about these three women. I was immersed in the data, which I refined into an analysis. Or, as Kvale stated (1996), I had to address "how do I go about finding what the interviews tell me about what I want to know?" (p. 180). In this chapter, I retell the women's stories, and by doing so, I am aware that I have already started the first step in interpretation (Erikson, 1978).

To shape the many events into coherent stories, Kvale (1996) suggested that "the researcher may alternate between being a narrative finder and being a narrative creator" (p. 201). The first part of the chapter starts with a brief discussion about some of the women's unifying threads in regard to *profession, families, education, work and adult life, church*, and the

glass ceiling. The second part presents and analyzes the stories told by these women in leadership positions. In the third part, a summary of the findings is provided.

Profession

The women in this study chose a degree in a profession which men dominated and continue to dominate. During our conversations, they have told me about events or incidents in their lives in regard to childhood, adolescence, marriage, and work. Life events are bench-marks in the human life cycle, argued Sugarman (1986). The understanding of these events is *change*, meaning geographical mobility, technological change, job moves, marriage, divorce and remarriage, and more. All these changes, according to Sugarman (1990), have contributed to a climate of social instability and a dramatic increase in the amount of change with which most people must cope during their lives.

Linda, Ann, and Amanda have all had to cope with unusual changes in their personal lives and careers, because they were entering a male-dominated profession. Individual growth, an important aspect of identity formation, occurs within a social and cultural context. Erikson (1968) argued that “we cannot separate personal growth and communal change” (p. 23). His view reflects a reciprocal process between an individual’s growth and a greater context. This perspective, of a reciprocity between actor and context, is echoed in Riesman’s (2001) view of social character, where social character is defined as “the more or less permanent socially and historically conditioned organization of an individual’s drives and satisfaction” (p. 4).

Families

The families of Linda, Ann, and Amanda were unusual relative to their eras by encouraging them to get an education. The women’s parents belong to the Great

Depression generation (1929 to 1939), or what Riesman (2001) called the inner-directed era (from approximately 1850 to 1950 in the United States). Linda, Ann, and Amanda were raised in post World War II families. After the Second World War, there was an era of optimism. Ann speaks of her family as the post war family where her parents had the goals of getting married, buying a new house, and having babies and her mother's goal was to be a stay-at-home mom and do the housekeeping.

Linda's experience with her childhood and post-World War II family is more of a struggle. Her parents did not have much income, and her father was often sick. Her father was not supportive of her or her siblings. They had to manage on their own with no help. "Everything we got, we had to get on our own," she recalls. Those were hard times, and those hard times experienced by the Great Depression generation produced hard rules (Phipps, 1997). Amanda's family was stable, warm, and close and she was raised in a stable environment. It seems that they were a happy family. Erikson (1968) quoted Freud and said that once Freud was asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well. Freud answered: "*Lieben und Arbeiten*," meaning "to love and to work" (p. 136). Erikson explained that a person should be able to be productive and want to be productive, but that work should not consume all energy, that there should also be time to be a loving human being.

During the Great Depression, the women's parents were teenagers. At this stage, argued Erikson (1980), there is integration in the child of ego identity and the individual prepares for what is coming later in life. Erikson discussed the importance of getting an occupational identity at this stage. During the Great Depression, there was high unemployment, widespread poverty, and few opportunities for economic growth and

personal advances. One can understand the difficulties these teenagers experienced during this time in regard to getting an education, getting a job, and even just surviving. Of course, some struggled more than others.

Education, Work, and Adult Life

Linda, Ann, and Amanda have worked continually since graduating from college. Linda and Amanda have worked full-time, and Ann worked part-time for 12 years. She tells me that she never stopped working, but “three days a week was just about right for me because it meant working only 40 hours a week instead of 80 or whatever I normally did.” To get a good position, you needed to be in the work environment all the time. There is no chance for women to climb the corporate ladder if you are out of the work environment, they all told me. Ann tells me that when her female friends whom she graduated with from college, left to have their babies, they never reentered the work force. “There is a good ol’ boys network in the oil and gas industry that allows them to be exclusive and tolerated” Ann tells me and she said that she has seen a lot over the years, but she knows that it is the industry: “*Significant is the fact that it is hard to break in.*”

Linda, Ann, and Amanda are similar in having had many different positions within the same company during their career. Ann and Amanda have also worked in different companies. All of them have 30 years of work experience in the business.

The reason the women chose engineering as a profession has to do with several factors; they liked math and science, and their families encouraged them to get an education. Also, they were inspired and influenced by their brothers (Linda and Amanda’s brothers were engineers) and their peers. These women are competitive and they wanted a job with high pay. Ann relates to me the counselor’s behavior when he asked her what she was going to

do after high school. When she said that she wanted to be an engineer, he asked her if she thought she was smart enough. She asked him why he said that. He answered, "You have to be really good in math and science." Ann told me that in her graduating high school class there were 500 to 600 students and she ranked 17th. She adds, "Why would that not make me smart enough? I think that he meant that I was not male enough." Amanda tells me that - just one woman who had graduated before she and her girlfriend were in college. "And I think that the professors did not know what to do with us. The women had endurance and persistence to go on despite these difficulties. Both, Linda and Ann are married and have been married for approximately 30 years. They speak about their spouses as being supportive. Amanda is newly divorced, and she was also married for approximately 30 years, but her divorce has been difficult. Today she is very confident that she did the right thing when she divorced.

Ann and Amanda both have children. Ann had two boys, and Amanda had one girl and three boys. Their children are young adults and some of them already have their own careers. The children bring great pleasure to these women but challenges, too. Their children are not as determined as their parents were regarding life goals and seem to need more time to make decisions than their parents did. This seemed to surprise one of the women.

These attitudes are typical of other-directed generations. "What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual either those known to him or those with whom he is directly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media" (Riesman, 2001, p. 21). Especially for Ann, it seemed to have been more of a puzzle why her sons did not go straight from high

school to college and then to the work-place. As Ann said, “They go and they come back, they move out and they move in.” She expands upon this statement and tells me that she and her husband believe that education is the way for their children to be “successful ultimately in life, and to feel like whole people.” Therefore, the behavior of her sons worries her to some degree.

Linda is childless. It is not that she did not want children, but it just did not happen. She spoke to me about being childless but wanted it off the record. This is the only time during our conversations that switching off the digital recorder was requested. Schlossberg (1989) described a transition as an event or nonevents. Events in a woman’s life could be, “having a baby, being promoted or losing a job” (p. 5). Furthermore, she claimed that transitions also stem from unexpected events, like “*not* being able having a baby, or *not* getting a promotion” (p.5). If a woman does not plan to not have a baby, then it is a non-occurrence event, something that was anticipated but did not happen.

Church

The church has played a major role in the lives of two of the women. It has been interesting for me, being from Scandinavia, to learn the important role the church played in these women’s daily lives. Ann and Amanda were raised in Catholic families where going to church on Sundays was what they did. Also, the church or the priest was a source of guidance and advice when there were personal problems in their lives.

But there were also problems with the close ties to the church. For example, for Ann, the church caused her to feel guilt, which became so problematic and such a burden on her that she finally broke with the Catholic Church. Her break with the church created disbelief in her family and the request for her to return. But Ann refused to do so.

For Linda, the church played a central role in her life, in a negative way. Her mother married her father, who was divorced. The Catholic Church did not recognize her mother's marriage, because of her father's divorce. Many years later the church called Linda's mother and said that they saw things differently now and would she like to be remarried? Linda said, "My mother's response was if I am going to hell, I am going to hell anyway, and I am married now, and if you don't support my marriage, it's not going to make a difference." Linda added, "She was a very strong, independent lady." For Amanda, the church and the priest has been of great support in the process of her divorce. Without the priest's support, it would have made it all the more difficult. He called her regularly during her divorce process and talked with her and gave her strength, she tells me.

The Glass Ceiling

Linda, Ann, and Amanda have experienced in their careers what is called the "glass ceiling." In 1986, an article by Hymowitz and Schellhardt was published in the *Wall Street Journal* (DOL, 1995) that described a phenomenon called the *glass ceiling* that women claimed to hit as they approached the top of the corporate hierarchy. The glass ceiling was an invisible barrier that was difficult for women to get around in reaching the top in the corporate environment. Linda, Ann, and Amanda have all had experiences with the glass ceiling during their journeys to leadership positions in corporations. Their experiences with the glass ceiling occurred in different environments and under different circumstances. Linda, who worked in the coal mining industry in the beginning of her career, remembers one of the union guys said to her, "The Company must be pretty stupid sending a dumb blonde like you out here." Whereupon she replied, "I don't think they are stupid, but give me a chance and let us see where things are after six months." And she adds that the first

two years she could not get anywhere in the company and therefore could not advance: “We could not get anywhere because we were women.” “No one would support me, and the union guys were not nice.”

Ann experienced a different type of glass ceiling. The company had financial difficulties and the president of the company came in to her office and told her, “You are the best engineer I have ever worked with, but I have to cut back on the payroll, and since the other engineers working here are the primary breadwinners, I figured it would be less of a burden on you than them to lose your job.” Ann lost her job and went to a customer of her company and got a new job even though it could be seen as a bit of a conflict. She went back to the president of her former job and explained to him “You laid me off and they are willing to pay my salary.” She worked there until they (her husband and her) were transferred to another state.

Amanda tells about how she was thinking, “Oh my gosh, I have reached the glass ceiling.” Her experience was that she was ready for this job (her dream job and the job she actually has now) but then she was questioned about her background. Was her experience sufficient for this position in the company? She tells me that when they asked this, she knew she had reached the glass ceiling. Because she had what she needed, there was no reason for her to not be qualified for the position, except that she was a woman. When she realized this, she left that company and started to work with a smaller company in the Gulf Area for some years. To sum up, it seems these women have moved in and out of positions to be able to get around hurdles on their journey to a top position in their companies.

Erikson (1980) claimed that identity formation also consists of cultural factors. One aspect of the identity formation is what the individual experiences as aligned with herself/himself. Another aspect is the sameness the individual experiences in regard to what is outside of self, namely, culture or social character. The women have done what they have felt necessary to be aligned with themselves and in so doing corrected factors outside themselves they could not accept.

Linda

“My father believed that you don’t appreciate anything you get for nothing. So therefore anything you get you will earn!”

I met Linda at her house one evening. She invited me to her home; she lives in a nice neighborhood with large houses on each side of the street. There are trees, flowers, and beautiful landscaping in this subdivision. The lawns are manicured, and as I approached her house, I could see that her home is beautiful. I looked forward to meeting her and getting to know her. I wondered what she looked like and whether we can create a good atmosphere together. The house looks dark when I ring the bell and the air is humid.

No one answers and after a while I get back to my car and call her on my cell phone. She has a delay because of a traffic jam and is terribly sorry, and she asks if I could just wait and she will be there any minute. I drive around in the neighborhood for a while just to let time go by and then drive back to the house, and now I can see that she must be home. There are lights inside and I ring the bell again. This time Linda opens the door; she smiles and apologizes for the delay. She invites me in and we sit down in her spacious living room. I tell her a little bit more about my self, how I traveled to Texas to get my doctorate and about the small university I worked for in Norway before I came to Texas.

Also, I share with her the interest I have in the topic of women in leadership positions and their identity formations on their journeys to these positions. With a feeling of mutual trust, we start to talk and Linda shares her story with me.

“My childhood is a little different, too”

Linda was born on the west coast of the United States and had a challenging childhood. As a child, she was sick a lot and this lasted through her adolescence. Linda’s family moved every other year because her father was in the military. As a little girl, they moved overseas because of his career. She remembers back to when she was four years old, living overseas. She remembers the different stores with different foods “and all that good stuff.” She tells me about her experience when they had her appendix removed “and that whole thing and recovering from that.” Linda attended nursery school overseas and she remembers learning “beer songs.” Then they moved back to the west coast in the states, and then they went on to the Midwest in the United States, which is known for its mining industry, and then back to the farm where her father was born. He had retired and he was sick; his sickness she describes as *“a lot of things that were tied into military life.”* Because of his bad health, she knew that he could die any minute.

As Linda shares her story about her childhood, she walks over to a table and brings back a picture of her mother and a picture of her father and places them facing me. Several times in our conversation she will turn the picture of her mother, look at it, and then put it back in the same position facing me. She will say looking at her mother’s picture “I am not half the person she was.” And about her father, “My father, he was not necessarily going to make it easy for us.” The pictures are sitting on the table between us as long as we talk together.

Erikson (1968) argued that the context has to be considered in the process of an individual's growth and identity formation. For Linda, parts of that context have consisted of moves, new schools and changing the physical environment several times. She was the youngest of four children; she has two older brothers and a sister. Linda's childhood was marked by little money, hard work, and very little help from her parents, especially her father.

The transition from moving back to the United States (from overseas) first to the west coast and then to a Midwest state was not easy. Her two older brothers and sister, who were used to being on military bases, able to go to the movies, and doing things, now came to a very different and difficult situation in the Midwest. Linda remembers the house they moved into: "The house was old and it had a coal stove. It had a corner for my brothers and a corner for my sister in the basement, and we did not have any money." There was not a lot of play she remembers, mostly work. Even though she was sick with asthma and allergies, she still went to school. She got worse, and at age 10 she developed problem with her skin that spread throughout her body; in the end, she could not walk. Because she was so sick, she would read a lot. And she adds, "I read anything ... all the kids would read ... if it was a *Playboy* my brother read, it was fine," she says with a laugh. Linda tells me that from the time she was born until she was 18, she "had very hard time breathing." She used a breathing machine, and continued on, "nothing stopped me." Linda was also hearing impaired. From the age of 13 to 16, she lost her hair and she lost her fingernails. In the first year of a child's life, the parents must according to Erikson (1985), establish a trust in the child. Not only must they guide the child, "they must also be able to represent to the child a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what

they are doing” (p. 249). Erikson (1985) underlines the word *meaning*. He claimed that even if the child will experience a sense of having been deprived, having been divided, having been abandoned, “that basic trust must maintain itself throughout life” (p. 250). Erikson (1985) also claimed that a child does not get neurotic from frustrations, “but from the lack of societal *meaning* in these frustrations” (p. 250). Linda tells me how her mother helped her through difficult times when she was sick.

Linda's Parents

“My father was necessarily not going to make it easy for us”

In our conversations, Linda make it clear that her father made it difficult for her and that he was not going to help her or her siblings to get an education or anything else. Despite the father’s emphasis on education, he would not help her; she had to do it on her own. “He said we had to earn everything.” He would help other people, she said, “but not the family.” Her mother was different; she worked in a café at minimum wage, and she did what she could to help the children but did not have the means. Linda remembers her mother telling her, “Whatever situation you are in, there will be someone that is better than you and some people are not so well off. So if you start to feel sorry for your-self, think about the people that don’t have what you have.” Linda (silence) adds, “Mother said that if you ever feel sorry for your self think about what other people go through.” She said “I think that my mother did that, to help me get through hard times because of my medical issues.” Linda tells me that she has the same value system as her parents. “You have to earn everything you get, no one owes you anything, you have to earn it!” Linda moves her hand toward her furniture and says “We have earned it.”

This belief system comes from individuals who lived through the Great Depression. As Linda said, “They lived in a time ... before child labor was illegal ... my mother worked in factories, they did not have anything.” She explains some of the parents’ decisions in terms of the context in which they grew up which was difficult. Her parents were of the Great Depression generation, they were young, and they did not have much. Her parents met under dramatic circumstances when her father was transporting a prisoner from one coast to another. Her father left his home at the age of 16. Her mother left home when she was 10 and was sent to an orphanage, and it was not a nice place to be. Ann says about her parents, “She pretty much took care of herself, she did not have a childhood, my dad did not have a childhood, and there was no welfare support at that time.” Ann continued “They were strong people that believed that they should take care of themselves and that it was their responsibilities and nobody owes you anything in this world. She was brought up to help them who help themselves. But not helping people if they are not helping themselves.” She explains “Because you make them dependent instead of helping themselves... That’s all part of my value system.” Linda has adapted her parents’ value system.

Adolescence and Young Adulthood

“I am still going to school, surviving ... using a wig”

Linda understood early that she had to be dependent on herself, because her parents could not help her. She left home at 18 years old and never went back to live with her parents, she tells me. Perhaps she is now searching for a new identity, or a new sense of continuity and sameness (Erikson, 1985). When she went to high school, she met her husband. He was from a similar background. But she says, “he was not encouraged to get

an education as I was.” She told him that if they were supposed to be a couple, he had to study, go to college, and get an education, like her. She says, “We did not get any help getting an education. So everything we have earned for ourselves.” She adds, “So my background is a little bit different than some who maybe went to Ivy League schools.” Since her dad was not doing anything to make things easy for her, “she had to look for an education.” She was going to be an engineer. She was determined, because she knew she could earn money as an engineer, because her older brother had done that. She also liked math and science, so it was her choice.

Everything she earned as a babysitter and doing anything else at which she could earn money from the time she was 14 went into her first semester of tuition. She went to community college first and got her first two years of engineering classes there. Luckily she could walk back and forth to the college for the two first years and therefore there was no additional expense involved.

Then she was able to get a scholarship through the state highway department. The agreement was that if she did not work for them, she would have to pay back all the money, which was about \$90 a month. She tells me that her college days were humble. She did not spend money, because she did not have anything to spend. She had one pair of shoes just to go to school. To get some additional money, she tutored and did some other activities. She did not date: “Who would want a girl without hair? (Laughter) “I am still going to school, surviving ... using a wig.” The young individual, like Linda, according to Erikson (1985) is at this time at the stage of intimacy versus isolation, and “is eager and willing to fuse his/her identity with that of others” (p. 263). This means, according to Erikson (1985), being ready to commit to a concrete partnership even if it means sacrifices

and compromises. He further claimed that “the danger of this stage is isolation, that is, the avoidance of contacts which commit to intimacy” (p. 266). In addition, he argued that, “the avoidance of such experiences because of fear of ego loss may lead to a deep sense of isolation and consequent self-absorption” (p. 264). For Linda, committing to another person would mean starting a new life. However, before she committed to him, she made sure that he would get a good education. In that way, they could be safe and live a life without uncertainty.

Adult Life and Career:

“I’ve been in a lot of dirty nasty, cold jobs working in underground mines”

Linda is in her early 50s, and she is in the stage of generativity, according to Erikson (1985). She graduated from the university with a degree in civil engineering at 22 years old. She has had great successes in her jobs. She started to work with an oil company (she still works in the same company) that also owned coal mines at that-time. Today, she has worked 30 years for the same company but had different positions in two or three states in the United States, in addition to one position with a coal mine in South America. From all her work experience, there are two jobs that stand out for her, both in mining. At this time, I experienced what Lawrence -Lightfoot (1997) says about *listening for a story, not to a story*.

Mining: Breaking the “dirty male job” Ceiling

Linda started out as a woman engineer in mining. The industry was totally male dominated and pretty much stayed that way (there ended up being four women in this company). When she was interviewed for this job, she wanted to be sure that the company wanted her for what she was and not because she was a woman. Linda wanted to be sure that they were looking for “good engineers, not just women.” This work interview turned out to be the beginning of her career.

“So I was working on construction of mines and responsible for all the construction in state x and y. From there I went to the operation side, to the headquarters, to the field and ... I was responsible for all the surface construction. Back again to headquarters to plan short and long term for the company. Surface manager, had 50-60 men working for me.”

To be a female engineer working in that environment was not easy. She tells me about harassment and says “it was a big issue.” The mine was badly managed and the politics was that males were hired, promoted, and then go the supervising jobs. “So there isn’t anything that I hadn’t seen or heard that I would be surprised by.” For the first two years, she could not get anywhere in the company, and therefore could not advance in the rank. “We could not get anywhere because we were women.” “No one would support me... the union guys were not very nice.” But, she says, “I treated them always with respect and I was persistent. No matter what they said, I never used profanities like they did.”

Linda tells me that until 1979, in the state where she worked, no women miners could work in an underground mine on “equipment or anything like that.” When the law

changed in 1979, they had the first woman miner in the company. She tells me that they got a new president who had two young daughters and they were now getting out in the workplace and he could start to relate to women in the work-place. This, she adds, was a significant event. Gilligan (1993) describes how she has become more “aware of the crucial role of women’s voices in maintaining or transforming a patriarchal world” (p. xii). It seems like the daughters of the new president in some way were transforming the patriarchal world.

After two years, her career started to take off, and she began to advance in the company. She was working on construction of mines. “I was involved with all the operations on the construction, the project manager on surface operations for about four years.” She moved back to the headquarters in the planning department, doing short-term and long-term planning. And then she was the surface manager with responsibility for 50 men. The union was not pleased with women being there. She tells me that the union did not give her any “breaks at all.”

“We had trains, we shipped coal, we had stock piles and all the trading act that time, within 6 months I actually had turned things around so that our recovery was great...I had made a lot of changes in the operations by talking to the experts about what needed to be done. If you could see an operation plant, its dirty, noisy, it’s got a stench and total filth all the time. Recovery and performance improved. I worked a lot with the union guys.” Linda said that when they gave her hard times, she would say, “I am bullet proof. I am here to talk to you.” She adds that she “was very supportive of them though they worked against her.” And she claimed

that: “They realized I was very sincere about their work environment and that we could control our destiny, it wasn’t something inflicted upon us.

We had a lot of safety issues and climate issues. You know, 20 below weather, cold side walk, walk out of my office in a snow suit and freeze.

I’ve been in a lot of dirty, nasty cold underground mines. Women don’t even come close to experiencing it.”

She advanced, and after 24 years in the company, “I was finally in the leadership position and everything was great.” After that the company wanted to get out of the mining business and she came back to the mine where she had been as a young engineer. She had to close down a mine. “I had the honor of closing down number 2, a 3 million ton mine in x state, and that was sad, but I sealed the shafts. I threw down the ... elevator. That was one of my not so happy accomplishments. That was a major task to do.” When Linda tells me this, I can relate to her and I can feel the sadness, because I grew up in a mining community that had to close down the mine.

South America

“The fact that my childhood was poor helped me to manage without much”

From all the different work experiences she has had, there is one more that stands out and that is her job experience as a planning manager for a coal mine in South America at a camp in a very remote area of the country. Linda had been there before she got the job because she wanted to see how a system she had put in worked. Her boss at that time did not want her to go, because he was worried that they would try to give her a job there. Linda said, “That’s exactly what happened.” When she came back to the United States, she got a call from South America that they would like her to come and be a planning manager

for the mine production. Her boss was furious and said no and told her not to communicate with them. Next, the president of X Minerals called her boss and said that she was going. Her U.S. Company owned 50% of the mine and the other 50% was owned by the government in South America. She left the United States and started as a planning manager for the largest surface export mine in the country.

The story about this camp, “in the wilderness” as she called it, is something she will go back to many times during our conversations. She lived in a camp as the only American woman there in the middle of nowhere. It was at the end of the 1990s. Everything was very basic. She was the only American woman and the only female manager. She moved there several months before her husband came to live with her. She lived in a very primitive wood cabin. At the camp there was a little grocery store, a little gym, and a little café. At the café she had breakfast, met other people and in this way established contact and talked with the others living in the camp. A truck came in once a week with supplies so they could get food. Everything had to be made from “scratch.” She got a maid to help her and cook for her, and they became very close.

She was there by herself, trying to learn about the culture. She tells me that she is very fond of gardening. At the camp, there was nothing. She wanted a lawn, but to do so she had to build an irrigation system so she could water it. Linda tells me how she recycled the water from the washing machine, back to a bucket, filtered it through pantyhose, and by doing so built an irrigation system so she could have a lawn and water it. Linda felt that she needed to be part of the culture. She learned Spanish to manage her job. Another popular activity there was the annual carnival. To be a part of that, she started to practice dancing, every night for 6 weeks. She had dresses made for the big performance. She had

never done anything like this before, and her husband was very surprised that she did. She was the first American woman who had done this, and after she did it, many other women did the same. “I showed them and then they could do the same.”

This experience of moving to a very remote place, as the only American woman, working with only men, and learning the language and their culture, seems to be an experience she will never forget. She says that the fact that her childhood was very poor helped her to manage without much. After she left South America, and went back to the United States, she and her husband tried to get the maid to the United States to live with them, but they were not able to do so. Linda says she feels that she has never recovered after she lost her.

At this stage, generativity versus stagnation, according to Erikson (1985), a healthy person feels she or he is producing ideas, ideals, affection, and respect for the spheres of love and work. Typical for this stage is also to be concerned about one’s children, to make the world a better place; however, Erikson (1968) claimed that there are other forms of altruistic concern, like creativity and productivity. The danger is to overdo it, get self-absorbed and thus become stagnated.

Linda was creative and productive; she created an irrigation system, she was learning to dance for the carnival and to learn about the culture she lived in. She was learning Spanish, and she gained affection and respect from the people living at the camp in the remote area of South America. Linda tells me that she misses that life. She said that those three years did something to her inner self. Even if they did not have much, this close and primitive community had so much to offer. When Linda looks back, she said that she became accepted over time (in a male world) and she explained, “Because I

proved myself and ... (silence) ... you always have to be twice as good as a man to get the credit.” Today Linda has recovered from most of her health issues. She is content with who she is. “I have learned that what I am doing is good enough.” Linda likes her job and wants to be supportive to other women in her organization and help them.

Ann

“I tried to see what I was doing that made life be a place where all you wanted to do is to be the best”

I meet Ann early Saturday morning and it is spring. After several emails back and forth, we were finally able to find a time for our interview. She is coming to my house this morning. I prepare coffee and the information sheet for her to sign before we start to talk. I place two chairs at an angle to each other in front of the desk in the study. In this way we do not need to look at each other's faces all the time; we can look a little bit to the side if we need to, both of us. Because an interview demands one's attention, it can be a relief to look aside once in a while. This is a preparation I do to avoid an imaginable tension that can occur in the interview situation.

While I am preparing the coffee, I am thinking about how this interview will turn out. The doorbell is ringing and there she is. Ann is tall and slim and she smiles. I welcome her and we walk into the study while we are making “small talk” to get to know each other a little better. She tells me that last night she had 50 people in her house for a charity. So, she is happy to come to my house instead of her house. Ann is open and friendly, and our interview takes more the form of a conversation that sometimes follows its own paths rather than an interview.

This situation is described by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as adaptability in gathering data, in this situation meaning that the researcher should be able to adapt to change in

context. Ann talks about her personal life, professional life, childhood, and experiences on her journey. She is interested in my topic for this study and happy to contribute to the research. Fontana and Frey (2005) speak about four modes of nonverbal communication. Ann is using body language a lot, leaning forward when she is speaking, and eagerly using her hands to underline something and she smiles and laughs during our conversations.

Childhood

“There was a right way to do things and a wrong way to do things”

Ann was born in a Midwestern state. She is the middle child, with an older brother and a younger sister. She was raised in a very religious Catholic family, with Sunday dinners at Grandma’s, celebrating birthdays and holidays. Her mother stayed home and her father worked sometimes two jobs to make ends meet. Their family was a “post war” family. There was a moral and Christian influence at the time, Ann tells me. Every Sunday the family went to church and every holiday was about church. No meat was eaten on Fridays, she says. She felt that “Catholicism breed guilt.” “I mean Catholicism is the perfect way to control the masses and so I felt that I became very obedient and guilt ridden, as a result, somebody who played inside the rules and thought there was a right way to do things and a wrong way to do things.” Ann adds, “I have since given up judgments, I have seen too many shades of grey over the years to realize there is no right and wrong, there are perspectives” (Ann laughs).

Ann says that she felt neglected when she was little and that she has “never been able to put a finger on it.” Her mother was taking care of her younger sister, who was not well, and her grandfather, who had emphysema. Her father focused on her brother, and he became the soccer coach, the baseball coach, and the Boy Scout leader. Ann adds, “My

dad didn't have a father he grew up with so my dad gave a lot ... he was very involved with my brother." She says that she was thinking that "maybe they will notice me if I get really good grades." Brown (2008) discussed the belief how "I must be perfect" comes about. One reason an individual can get this feeling is when parents execute "unfair and unfavorable comparisons with siblings and others" (p. 37). It seems like this might be the case for Ann.

Ann's grandmother died when she was four years old and then her grandfather came to live with them. Ann was very fond of her grandfather. She even named one of her sons after him. Ann's grandfather lived down-stairs, and she says "it was like, if you had some issue at all growing up, you just go down the stairs and talk to grandpa, he would help you put it all in perspective, it was like having a living saint ... He was just wonderful." Ann says that her grandpa died when she was 11, but the years he spent there was some "really incredible years."

Here, Ann is at the stage that Erikson (1985) called *industry versus inferiority*. The motto for this stage is *I am what I learn*. Ann said that she was thinking that "maybe they noticed me if I get really good grades." Ann is the middle child. Her father is busy with her older brother and her mother is busy with her sick sister. It seems like Ann's grandfather is one person she can trust in these times. She referred to him as a *living saint*.

Erikson (1985) claimed that at this time the child wants to learn new skills and win recognition from the adults who surrounded him/her. If the child experiences little success, it will develop a sense of inferiority or incompetence.

Ann remembers life "being about having lots of family." Her cousins felt more like brothers and sisters than cousins. She could go to her aunt to get comfort if she needed it,

and she would then spend the night in her aunt's house. When asking her mother if she can go to her aunt's, her mother said, "Sure! Of course you can go and spend the night with Aunt Mary." Her mother is positive and confirming Ann's wishes.

Ann remembers a lot of play, both with her siblings and with neighbors. They played with Barbie dolls, and they took the garden hose to separate the yard into the transporter room so that they could play Star Trek, which was very popular in the 1960s. She said that there was a lot of creative play. Ann took dance lessons and later played softball. When she looks back at her childhood, there was a lot of doll playing and bicycles, and then she liked to play with the boys. She wanted to be a part of her brother's circle. And she adds, "I was even at that point in time interested in how to compete with men." When the pond froze over and the "boys went down to play hockey, I would, too." Her mother would say, "Don't tag along with your brother; not that he didn't want me there, but it was like, Why don't you play with the girls" (laugh). It seemed like Ann wanted to play with the boys, she wanted to be a part of her brother's circle.

Erikson (1980) claimed that a first sense of equality of opportunities developed at this time. Freud (1974) called this stage the latency stage wherein boys and girls want to have friends of the same sex. In addition, Erikson (1985) claimed that at this stage (industry versus inferiority) a child wants to learn new skills, and compare themselves with others. Children at this age *want* to and *need* to experience success and they want to be good. Furthermore, Erikson (1980, p. 93) claimed that children develop a "first sense of division of labor" at this age.

Ann is active as a child, and it seems like she got the skills she needed. She said that her family was traditional, they sat down for dinner every night and had three meals a

day, and her mother packed the children's lunch and did their laundry. Ann adds, "We all came out with a very strong work ethic."

Adolescence

"One million times during my classes I heard that counselor saying— you are not smart enough to be an engineer"

No one in Ann's family has gone to college. Ann's brother went to college but came back after the first semester, because he did not maintain acceptable grades. She tells me that he was more of an athlete, while she was more "the intellect or the academic." But the family expected Ann to go to college, and she did and got a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering.

The expectation in her family was that she would go to a Catholic high school, because everybody did that. She did not know anyone who was not Catholic, but *then* she started to find out that some people were not. She tells me that she does not mean to keep focusing on that (being a Catholic) but she says, "It's huge! Everybody is Catholic, parents, parents' friends, all the neighbors when you don't see any form of diversity. Everyone is white; everyone is Catholic, everyone is middle class, everyone's father works one or two jobs, everyone's mother stays home and sews their clothes" (laughter). Ann's decision on why she did not want to go to a Catholic high school was made as follows. She went to go to take the entrance exam, and the entrance exams had typically been rigorous, and certain people were not allowed to go. That year she took the exam she got the information that because there were so few people taking the entrance exam, everyone got accepted. Her response was that why should they spend the money when everybody was accepted, "When you could get that with your tax dollars, for free?" Ann says, "I was always frugal

and my mother said that frugal beyond what they wanted me to be, I worried too much about their money, is what she would say.” Ann had developed relationships with other students, between fourth and eighth grades in the public school and did not want to go to an all girls school. She went to a public high school, and that school happened to be very good college preparatory school. They took a lot of math and science classes and had very good teachers. She started to play tennis on the boys’ tennis team, because there was no girls’ tennis team.

Ann continued to tell me about her very good friend in high school, Christine, who was probably one of the greater influences of my life.” Her father was an engineer, her sister was an engineer married to an engineer, and her brother was an engineer. They were a very accomplished family,” as Ann puts it. “I would say that they underplayed their wealth.” She got a lot of information from Christine, for example, about women’s rights and these types of things. And it was Christine’s idea that Ann should join the tennis team. Ann claimed that it was an important relationship because from Christine she got support that women should be allowed to compete with men, and she adds, “My family was more traditional.”

She and Christine got on the tennis team together: “We tried it out and we actually made the team and were on the team for two years until they formed a woman’s team.” By then Ann was busy working and going to school and figuring out what to do for college. In her junior year in high school, Christine said, “I want to be an engineer,” and Ann said, “I’ll be that, too.” My mother would say to me, “What do you want to be? And I would say I want to be a classical pianist.” My mother’s practicality in these things was “Can you get a job doing that?” Ann adds, “So still the issue was can you make a living, can you be

independent? Ann is now at the stage Erikson (1985) called identity versus role confusion, and it is an important time in shaping an identity. The teenager is now searching for a “new sense of continuity and sameness” (p. 261). It seems like Ann is trying to get some advice from her mother, helping her in her identity formation. When her mother asks her what she wants to be, and she said *a classical pianist*, her mother responds, can you *make a living* doing that? There are no further questions, about Ann’s *sincerity* or *meaning* it. At this time it is important for Ann to find out who she is and how she fits in the society. Ann has had a stable home with a mother who takes care of the children’s needs; in addition, Ann has had a good role model in her grandfather. Also, Christine and her family are contributing to Ann’s decisions about playing tennis, going to college, and choosing an engineering degree.

When Ann went to the counselor and he asked her what she was going to do after high school. He told her when she stated that she was going to be an engineer, “I don’t think you are smart enough to do that.” Ann said she remembers saying “Why do you say that?” and he answered that she had to be really good in math and science. Ann recalled “It is interesting, there were 500-600 students in my graduate class, and I was number 17.” “Why would that not make me smart enough?” Ann adds that, “I began to believe that he said you are not male enough.” Her girlfriend, Christine, was number 2 in the class.” I think that we were getting a lot of energy from Christine’s sister said Ann. Ann and Christine went to college, but in December her girlfriend quit school because she missed her boyfriend. Ann continued and graduated. Ann says that she

“followed her lead and I would have to say not less than a million times throughout those years, when I was in classes I thought were way

too tough for me to get,” she adds, “I hear that counselor saying you are not smart enough to be an engineer.” She tells me that she remembers thinking to her self “It was somewhere between ‘I’ll show him’ and Maybe he was right.” (Laughter) Ann tells me that she did not find engineering school to be easy, and “I guess you are not suppose to. But I did well; I graduated summa cum laude, no I mean magna cum laude.”

The Catholic Church, Parents, and the Crisis

Ann told me that she left the Catholic Church eight years ago. When she did that, it became “a real crisis in my family that someone left the Catholic Church.” Since Ann left the church, her sister did the same. She said the fact that they did that is still a crisis for the rest of the family. Her aunt will tell her that she prays every-day that she will return to the church. She tells me that she attends a different church every Sunday, but “there is less guilt and no Pope.” Ann said, “The problem with the Catholic Church is that, in contrast to Protestants, they do not believe ‘Jesus alone is Heaven, salvation is by grace alone,’ Catholics has been taught to believe ‘it is not by grace alone, it is by God’s work as well.’ This is a difficult way to live your life she tells me, “It’s never having confidence that Heaven is yours.” This results in overdoing things, to achieve and *be good*. She explained that when bad things happen in the life of a Catholic, she will look at it as God giving you retribution. She said she has developed a different relationship with herself as a result of giving up: “I got to do, to be good.” She is much easier on herself now than she used to be, and much clearer. “And you know, if I don’t go church on Sunday, I don’t deserve to get into a car accident the next week,” she said and laughs. Ann adds, “I walked that road just because I didn’t want *to face* my parents.”

My parents made my husband become Catholic so that I could marry him. He used to be a Protestant.” Ann broke with the church, and this might be what Erikson (1968) described as negative identity. He explained that negative identity was dictated by the necessity of finding and defending a niche of one’s own against the excessive ideals by “ambitious parents or indeed actualized by superior ones” (p. 175). As Ann stated, she stayed with the church because she did not want to confront her parents about questioning the Catholic Church and rules. Even though Ann expressed that her family was able to talk about difficult issues at home, she did not want to face them in this matter. Erikson stated that choices of negative identity could express some kind of regaining some mastery in a situation.

Adult Life

“The best way to make money is to change jobs because you can negotiate better and better jobs”

Ann is in the generativity stage according to Erikson (1985). Erikson claimed that at this stage, it is primarily the concern to establish and guide the next generation. It concerns the upbringing of the next generation as well as contributing to the good for society, being a productive member of society. Ann is concerned about her children and how they are going to succeed in school and in their lives. At the same time she experiences challenges at work. According to this stage, it has to be a balance between generativity versus stagnation.

She tells me that she has always been ambitious. After two years in X Oil Company, she left. The reason she left was that the company would not let her progress along with men. She adds: “They had an intern program, but when you got to a certain

place, they sidelined the women and only took men.” She says, “When I hit that, I quit!” She moved on to another company and she became a manager after three to four years. “I was actually a workaholic and I progressed really quickly in that corporation.” This company was bought out when the oil prices collapsed in 1983, and she was offered another job in another state, but she and her husband decided to not take it. She got a new job at a small oil company and worked there for six years while she had two children. She was able to negotiate to work three days a week for a 40% pay cut. She believes that because the industry was in dire straits, she was able to negotiate this. They moved to a new city and through her business relationship she was hired at another company on the same basis. She says, “Three days a week was just about right for me because it meant I worked *only* 40 hours a week (laughter) instead of 80 or whatever I normally did.” She says that she had a great relationship with those people. She lost her job when the company laid off people, and she went to another company. She worked there until they were transferred to a new state.

Moving to a new state, she took off 9 months to build a new house and get to know the kids’ teachers; the children were now in the third and sixths grades. She got involved with Scouting, coached soccer, and coached tennis. She worked with religious studies and helped the teachers at school, so she was very involved in her children’s activities.

After 9 months, she started working fulltime at an oil company. She worked in the same community as she lived, so she took her children to school in the morning and before she went to her work. In the afternoon, the children were in “great after school programs.” She adds, “Those were great years” (she says that she misses the time when the

children were small). About the company, she says, “It was the most conservative, male dominated, backward ... I was the only professional, speaking of professionals’ positions, there were no women, I was the only one.” Her company was bought out by another energy company and she was transferred farther away from where she lived. Her children were much older and she felt freer to commute farther away from home. In this company, Ann has gone from being an engineer and “then I became a supervisor, and then I became a manager.” Hurricane Rita made Ann realize that she was “stretching” herself way too much and then came what she called The Perfect Storm.

The Perfect Storm

“I became very emotional, starting to get depressed and to get suicidal tendencies”

“So for three years, but it was a lifetime worth of work, though,” Ann explained, she had to make a change in her life. She said “I was a workaholic.” She said, “I had to do it out of necessity, because of all the things that started to sneak in like not sleeping enough, being under constant pressure, ignoring my family.” She tells me that she slept at the hotel close to her office, so that she could just sleep five hours and then go back the next morning. And she adds, “I did this fairly regularly.” And she explains how it came about: “A lot of it had to do with my boss. I had never worked for a true narcissist before and I got the opportunity to understand that for some people ‘Everything is not enough.’ She wanted to succeed. She was in a position that was very visible, and she got a lot of corporate exposure; she succeeded and it had payoffs. “It was a very privileged position, and it was through my hard work I had gotten all that way.” Then, she tells me she hit the wall. Her body could not take it any more: “it was depression and anxiety ... and it really came about.” (Silence) Ann then tells me about this incident.

“It was budget season and I had worked for two weeks with very little sleep to be able to produce the budget. And by darn, here comes the day of the budget, and here are hurricane Rita, was it Rita that came after Katrina? I think it was Rita. It coincided with the warning of our budget presentation. After an hour of the presentation that I had been working on, inexplicably for the part of months it takes to put together a billion dollar budget. To put that together and on the day of the presentation, after I had spent the night on the couch outside my office to be able to have everything finished for the 8 o'clock meeting we actually said to executives that ‘you really need to leave now, or you will not be able to leave the city.’ So, they went on the corporate jet to another state where our headquarters is.”

The decision to evacuate the office was made to get everybody home before the storm.

She said:

“It was critical. I hadn’t slept much in several weeks, and I was, - would say, brittle. And for anyone who is brittle, something like a hurricane...I had never been through a hurricane before. Somebody drove me home, of course I won’t drive when I haven’t had enough sleep. Interestingly enough, your cognitive skills are still very good on too little sleep, but your motor skills are terrible. It wasn’t like I was putting out crappy work and not realizing it; I was putting out great work, but not functioning very well other wise. I came home, and asked my husband ‘we are going to leave, aren’t we?’ but he said, ‘NO, we are going to stay here.’

At this point all the highways were crowded; people were running out of gasoline. I just did not recover from that experience. I found myself crying a lot, and just doing things like ...you know ...because of my family history, we have a lot of depression that runs in the family, so I knew I wasn't going to be ... It was likely I had a propensity for it. So, I wound up just being very emotional, starting to have suicidal tendencies or thoughts. I went to a doctor who told me I really needed to get on medication, and then I started with a therapist who I had for two years. OH boy that was the opportunity to really... she was wonderful! I was like a dry sponge, just soaked it all up, I tried to see what I was doing that made life be a place where all you want to do is being the best, to that extent that it is ruining relationships.”

Ann described herself as a “workaholic.” Erikson (1985) stated that adults want to accomplish something: “mature man needs to be needed” (p. 267), to, in other words, be productive in society. On the other hand, the risk is stagnation, said Erikson (1985). Ann is over doing it in her job, responding to her boss, who she referred to as a “true narcissist.” The impossible demands her boss made on Ann represents a behavior that is unrealistic and self serving (Brown, 2008). An individual can try to be so productive that there is no time for anything else other than this “vehicle of self-concern” (Erikson, 1985, p. 267). Ann produces in her job until her body says to stop. This incident that she called The Perfect Storm made her rethink about the meaning of life.

Turning Point

After Hurricane Rita, Ann went to Europe for the first time, in 2006. Her cousin had invited her for years, and she had always answered I can't, I can't, I can't. But suddenly she saw that she was passing up opportunities to really live life. She was *stuck* in Italy

“for 6 complete days with nothing to do, except to sit and have coffee, and to notice that people weren't really eating fast food, watch the girlfriends arm in arm, see people talking, see the pace. People were walking down the street. Not that everyone is friendly and that type of thing, but you didn't get the sense of tension. That is what I felt in love with in Europe, the pace, a different way of living. They closed down the shops, just when I was done with lunch and wanted to shop. I remember thinking, how can a culture like this continue on the face of world dependence? I realized that Italy is not westernized. You are not seeing the influence of Chinese goods and American products, it is still Italian. You pick it up, and it's Italian. I fell in love with it.”

Today Ann is a successive business woman. She said that she likes who she is now. During her career she has changed jobs, but her career has been in the oil and gas, or energy, business. Ann has been in her current position for seven years. She was asked to head up a new group in the International division that is looking to develop unconventional resources internationally, with primary focus in Europe. Last year she spent 100 nights overseas. She loved to travel to Europe. Today Ann says that she has learned to be satisfied with the fact that she is working hard and doing a good job. Over the years, to be perceived as that, she wasn't going to be considered half as good; she was

going to be the best. “So I probably worked four times as hard then (laughter).” She tells me that along the way, she realized that wasn’t a popular way of being. To some people it looked demeaning, to some people as if she was bullying. “I think my strength and my commitment were perceived by the men I worked with to be over the top. That is not the way to get into the boys’ club, so I found a softer way of dealing with them. It is not that I don’t work hard, but I have learned to set boundaries about what is my job and what is another’s job.

“I think a lot of that is just a natural entry into management, which does... I can’t do it all myself, I needed to learn to empower people. It is my job to communicate and to empower others, to have a vision, to make sure that the absences of the softer side in the organization lend itself to women being good managers.”

She adds that her company is really big on talking about values, and the last two years have been focused on values about more communication and high levels of integrity, teamwork, and collaboration. She adds “The things that I think I probably have been good at, all these years, but they were not valued back then, but they are valued now. In many ways I’ve come into my own.” It seems like Ann has developed a boundary strength that is protecting herself and by so doing also respecting her self (Brown, 2008). Ann was absorbed in her job, to that degree that she did not have time for her family and it went so far that she had to stop that *out of necessity*.

Amanda

“This is the job of my dreams”

It is morning, Easter Saturday, when I am on the road on my way to Amanda. We have an appointment at 10:30 for our interview. The roads take me through very nice areas with green trees, flowers, and manicured golf courts. I look forward to meet Amanda. I am glad that she can see me because she is a very busy woman and not often at her home. The GPS leads me to her attractive, large house. There is work going on outside her house (later she tells me that they are preparing for her daughter's wedding). I am delighted that she took time to see me.

I rang the doorbell. Amanda opened the door and greeted me. She smiles and welcomes me in. She is not a tall woman and she is soft spoken. She smiles and invites me into her home. I go inside and we walk through the house and out onto the back side of the house to the pool area. The house is big and has rich colors. Outside she gestures toward a chair and we sit down, and she asks me if this is OK. There are people working in the backyard and there is some noise, so after some small talk, I ask her if we can go inside after all.

It is difficult to have a conversation here because of the work that is going on. I am worried that because of all the noise I will not be able to listen to the digital recorder when I am going to transcribe the interview. We go inside the house again, and she leads me into a library like room. We sit down to talk and Amanda shares her story with me.

Childhood

"We had a good family, we were very close"

Amanda is born in a Midwest state. Her childhood has been positive in a stable environment with her father, mother, and siblings. She was the youngest of five children. Her father always said that she got the best qualities of all the children as the youngest, she tells me and laughs.

Her parents were wonderful parents and very encouraging. Her mother was a very fun and warm person, and Amanda says that "she always encouraged me." She died 15 years ago. When Amanda tells me this, she gets silent for a while and adds, "She died on Good Friday... and it was really hard." This is Easter Saturday and I understand that this day triggers her memories about her mother. She tells me that she was really attached and close to her mother.

Amanda says that her family was very warm and they were all very close to each other. Later she will tell me that they call each other several times a week. Her family went on many long vacations, and she remembers those as wonderful. Her father was working a lot when she was little, always working "many, many hours." Amanda tells me that when she started to work after graduating from college she was shocked to find out that "other people's ... fathers took Saturday and Sundays off, because she didn't know that."

Her mother was a home-maker. Her mother never had the chance to go to college, which was unfortunate because she was a straight A student; she never had a B in her life. She was about to go to college, but then her father died so she had to go to work instead. Amanda says that her mother was very encouraging to her and her siblings. She wanted them to do well in school. Her father was also encouraging but her mother was more so.

She thinks that her father was worried that she would be a career woman without having a family and children. But he was relieved when he understood that she would have family, children, and a career, *have it all* as she says.

It seems that Amanda looks back at a childhood that provided a safe and stable environment. Erikson (1985) emphasized the importance of trust from early childhood. Amanda thinks about her mother as a very warm and encouraging mother. Erikson (1980) claimed that the interaction between mother and child creates a sense of being “all right, of being oneself, and becoming what other people trust one will become” (p. 65). Her father works a lot and is not home much. Amanda stated that she thought *all fathers worked Saturdays and Sundays*.

Children need goals that are achievable and appreciated by the mirroring parents, said Erikson (1985) and it seems like it is her mother that is primarily *mirroring* for Amanda. Erikson (1985) claimed that the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt sets the “direction toward the possible and the tangible” (p. 258) and in so doing admits dreams from early childhood to be connected to the purpose of an active adult life. Also, it seems like Amanda is prepared for school and has learned the skills she needed.

There was play in Amanda’s life and she said that her home was not a strict home. To be allowed to be a child is important for the child’s development; otherwise, it can lead to a narrow virtuosity, according to Erikson (1980).

Adolescence

Amanda had always liked chemistry and math. She was number one in her class throughout school. She did not know what to do in college. She had some thoughts about nursing and medical technology, but she did not really know what to do. When she told her mother that she wanted to make this her major, for example, nursing, her mother would not make any significant comment, telling Amanda without saying so that she did not think it was a good idea.

Amanda said that her mother had her own way to make her understand that and when she told her mother later that she wanted to be a chemical engineer, her mother would tell everybody, “My Amanda is going to be a chemical engineer!” Amanda adds with a laugh, “I think that she didn’t really know what a chemical engineer was, but it sounded really good.” “She was so proud,” she adds. However, Amanda’s oldest brother was a chemical engineer, and her mother knew that he was doing really well. So, her mother was very encouraging and very proud of her daughter.

Her father was also very proud of her, said Amanda, but she did not really find out until later. This is the stage of Identity versus role confusion according to Erikson (1985). It is the stage where childhood comes to an end and puberty begins; this stage ends around 18 years. With that, Erikson (1980) claimed all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are now questioned. It is an integration of ego identity and a phase to prepare for later life to commit to a person, ideals, and an occupation but at the same time to not feel trapped by these commitments.

Erikson emphasizes the importance of *meaning* having sincerity in one's choice as opposed to a hollow feeling of “faking it” (Erikson, 1962). It was not until Amanda was in

her first year in college that she decided what she wanted to do. Since she always liked chemistry and math, she started her first year in college taking chemistry classes and she really enjoyed it, but she still did not know what she wanted to do. Amanda's friend Jill was taking the same classes. And Jill knew she was going into chemical engineering. And her boyfriend was in chemical engineering.

Amanda tells how her friend Jill told her and some other friends one day that she didn't want to be the only girl in class, and asked why don't you come into the class with me? Amanda says, "And I said, well, my brother is a chemical engineer, maybe I will try it." So, that is exactly what happened. So, Jill and she both signed up for chemical classes (laughter) and "we loved it." Amanda said that they did well. She adds that when they graduated they were the second and third women to graduate in that field. And then when they graduated, there were four or five women of 200 engineering students. Amanda said that the professors never had girls in their classes and that she felt that they didn't really know what to do with them. "I think they enjoyed us ... And we enjoyed all the attention, it was fun." (Laughter)

Work Life and Career

Amanda is in the beginning of her 50s and in the stage of generativity according to Erikson (1985). She is the top manager of a plant in an international company. She has few female colleagues in the United States. She loves her job and says that “this is the job of my dreams.” It has taken her many years to get there and she has also been through some hurdles and had some challenges in her life to get where she is at this time.

As a woman, Amanda says that she always had to prove herself, and she adds, “Men have credibility, women don’t. You don’t have the credibility when you walk in a room as a man does.” When she started out in the energy industry (oil and gas), there were just men. Today there are many women, “but very few women, are actually up to the line in the organization” actually there is just a handful of women that hold any level of power,” she tells me. Yesterday, Amanda says, they had a luncheon and there were six women there, and three were retired, “so that means that there are just three of us.” And in the whole corporate system, there are few of them.

When Amanda left her former job in the same system, she was the highest ranking woman there. She explains some of her experience getting to the top in the hierarchy in her company. “If I pushed too hard to get to a position that was a male role, then, I would get a lot of, push back. So, I just kept on, every time there came a job ... I kept applying for it. After about six tries, they finally put me in a role in a manager position.”

Amanda tells me that “even to this day, my boss he thinks nothing of having his peers at his lake house in the weekends, making hamburgers, drinking beer ... singing songs, and working out and ... but obviously I was never invited ... this is the first time I

ran into that, or one of the first time I ran into that. I was the first woman they have ever hired.”

To get to higher positions, she had to leave the company. She was there for 28 years, and she said that even if she had the background to be the next top manager, they started to question her background. And she adds, “even if I had worked my way through operations, they would ask me about my background.” She left her job and went to work for a small company. Amanda said that she worked for a wonderful man and had a wonderful team, a great team. “It was just that ... (silence) ... all of a sudden I had the credibility (laugh).” “So after 20 some years, working in the industry I had to prove my self over again, and it took me about 5 years.”

Amanda wanted to get the plant manager position (the manager there quit) and she says, “Fortunately, there was a woman there, she turned out to be the CEO of manufacturing and she was really great. She was just 2 years older than me. She went to Rice University to graduate in math and went to grad school for her MBA at Harvard. And she was on the fast track with the big company.” She adds, “I never saw a person absorb so much data...Ironically, she is CEO at the company now, she left 6 months ago and (silence) she was strong, she was the one who really played a key role for me.” When Amanda applied for the job as a manager, the boss there suggested that she needed more experience in the production field. And Amanda said “I would do it if I needed to prove myself to be a plant manager, but I had had that job for 10 years in another company and was successful then.”

Amanda was advised to go and talk with Lisa. She was the CEO executive vice president. Amanda spoke with Lisa, the CEO, and told her that she would be happy to be

the manager of the plant. Amanda tells me that Lisa told her, “It’s so funny! If you come from outside you have no background no credibility,” and Lisa said that “they totally discounted your practice.” Amanda said that Lisa told her that something similar happened to her. Lisa had been in “operation” for 15 to 16 years and they totally discounted that experience. Amanda then tells me that Lisa said, “I am not going to discount that, I read your résumé. I know what you have done; I will put you on as the plant manager.” And then Amanda got her dream job as a manager for the plant. She adds “and it worked out really well, because this is the job I really wanted and a plant I am familiar with. And actually before I ... (silence) ... I actually benchmarked it. I had read everything there was to read about it. So it was really funny that I ended up here. The former manager quit. I have never seen that in my whole career that something like that could happen. He quit and went to another company. And so she called me and asked would I like to be the plant manager in X plant. “I was thrilled.”

She said that she got the job she always had wanted. She was able to pick her team. And she felt really good about that. She likes the culture where she works now. The people are very friendly, they are family oriented, positive, and kind, and they have religious faith. She adds, “I kind of connected with them, we are talking about core values and (silence) ... keeping a positive attitude. And work together. And they say ‘What can I do to be the best in the world?’ And we have excellent safety recording ... and there is a phenomenal performance ... and we have the best performance.”

Amanda has worked full time since college and at the same time had four children. They had a nanny for 12 years. Amanda tells me that early on the nanny would ask her what expectation she had, and she would answer, “love my children and that we should all

be a family.” She tells me that the nanny would buy birthday gifts for the children and she and her husband would buy a birthday gift for her and “we always treated her very well.” She lived with them until her youngest started first grade in school. Then she left them and went back to the state she came from. She tells me that it was a very difficult separation, because she was so attached to her youngest son. She was terribly, terribly attached to my youngest, and to the point it was not good. She loved my other children, but she was especially attached to him. So it was probably not a good situation.” They parted fine, but it was difficult for her, the nanny, she says.

The Transition

When I ask Amanda about her personal life and her growth, she tells me, “I was not fulfilled in my marriage, but in my children and in my job.” She adds that she is still growing and that she has grown tremendously during the last two years and particularly during the last year. “I think that I reached a turning point.” She adds that she has a strong network. She tells me how the new job, her good friends, and her boss helped her in what she calls “coaching my heart.” When she started the new job, she tells me that “My boss said that you tend to wind up quickly ... there must be some *structure* in your life you have not ... (silence) ... there must be something in your life that you have not challenged.” “And so he helped me to do some searching and some ... (silence) ...and a few other people that I worked with helped me to face my situation.” Amanda tells me that they helped her to make some changes in her personal life.

She goes on and said, “And just recently... I got divorced” [about 6 months ago]. Amanda says that had she not gone to another state and developed that support system

and got helped in *coaching her heart*, she would not have known what to do. Amanda shares with me her thoughts about getting a divorce.

“I would not have realized what I needed to do. But Mary (girlfriend) and some significant friends helped me.” She shares with me her doubts about doing the right thing when she got a divorce. “I didn’t have that courage, no, that is not the right word ... I did think strongly about having a family. I had my four children. Not because of that, but I believe in strong family. I used to say that when you divorce ... I don’t think like that anymore, but when you divorce you don’t think about your children. And so it was important for me to stay together till my children were grown up. And then a combination of going to a new place in the Gulf Coast area and my youngest going to college, I realized that I could not stay in the situation much longer.” Amanda tells me that she can now see that this situation in the marriage caused her to be tight and anxious. “And now I can see that I am much more relaxed ... and I am still going through it ... I am not completely healed yet ... but, it was a good thing to get out of the situation.”

When Amanda tells me about how her children reacted to her decision about getting a divorce, she said, “My youngest, he could not imagine us staying together ... my oldest ... was devastated...and my daughter was ... she thought we had a perfect family ... which we did in a lot of ways.” She explained to me “because we [her husband and her] both loved our children so much, we both took good care of them.” She tells me that her husband had issues that she kept private and kept compartmentalized. She never addressed

them, “but finally I did, last October. Because who could I tell?” She adds that she could not leave him. She could not handle four children by herself with this “demanding job and raising four children by herself.” And “I cared for him and thought that I never could divorce him and remarry ... and we were in the Catholic Church with all that led into ...” She tells me that her son has been so helpful to her. She also says that her sister has been very helpful, when she called her to talk with her about all the issues she had kept for herself, she just cried and cried. And she had told her that “you have nothing to be concerned of and she was very supportive and she connected me to my spiritual leader.” Amanda tells me that he would talk with her one hour every other day and that he has been “really wonderful.” And she said that “and even if I start thinking that I was selfish ... the kids ... and the relationship, he (the priest) was the one who said, NO, it is over, it’s out.” She goes on to tell me that the priest, her boss, and her younger son have helped her in this situation. There have been some other friends, also, but just a few. Because, she adds, “You can’t tell people ... three of my siblings know ... my oldest brother, he doesn’t need to know ... my step mom and my dad and a couple of key friends.” She says that if someone asks, her friends will say, “I can’t tell you what it is but Amanda has made the right decision.” She tells me that her priest will help her to understand.

Amanda tells me that she was not fulfilled in her marriage but in her children and job. But today she feels so much, much better. “Believe it or not, I feel stronger than ever.” In the end of our conversation, Amanda asks herself “Why was I not confident enough when I was doing so well in my job and with my kids to get a divorce? Why was I not confident? Amanda is in the generativity stage, according to Erikson (1985). She is concerned about her children and their future. She has had problems with her youngest son, but they are

solved today. Amanda is very proud of her children. “They have done very well,” she said. Two of the children are engineers already, one has chosen a different path and the youngest is going to be a chemical engineer like his mother. It seems that Amanda’s personal life has been more challenging than her work life and career. Today she is, as she says, still healing after her divorce, but much stronger than ever.

Summary of Findings

Erikson (1980) claimed that the term *identity* “expresses a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness, within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p. 109). Furthermore, he argued that identity is never established as something fixed or unchangeable (Erikson, 1968). I have felt Erikson’s statements when I have listened to the voices of Linda, Ann, and Amanda. When I say *listened to voices*, I will borrow a sentence from Gilligan (1993), who said, “I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of self” (p. xvi). Through their journey from childhood to adolescence and adult life, I have had the opportunity to get to know them. The sharing of their experiences has been a journey for me, too.

Erikson (1968) said that individual growth, which is an important aspect of identity formation, occurs within a social and cultural context. In other words, it is a reciprocal process, within the social and cultural context. The material factors to the women’s success can be listed as the following: *their mothers, their families, peers and the women’s persistence, endurance, and strength*.

Linda’s, Ann’s, and Amanda’s childhood has for the most part been good for them, with good families, sisters and brothers, and playing with other children. However, there have also been challenges, in overcoming health problems, competition, having little

money, and a changing environment because of many moves. Linda's childhood was marked by little money, many moves, and little support from her father. He was retired early in her life and had many health issues, and she never knew when he was going to die. This is a reality that Linda had to face. Identity formation is relational, "persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others," claimed Erikson (1980, p.109). Linda's father was not helpful to Linda or any of her siblings. However, her mother was. She did all she could to help Linda and her sister and brothers. Linda said about her mother, "I am not half the person she was." She tells that her mother worked for minimum pay and did all she could to help the children. She also helped Linda through hard times when she had severe health problems throughout childhood and adolescence.

Ann had some challenging times in her childhood because she felt that she was not noticed. She was thinking, "Maybe they will notice me if I get really good grades." Her mother stayed home and took care of all the children's needs. She was also supporting and understanding when Ann asked to go and visit her aunt. She could talk to her about education and her mother said that she should not worry too much about money for school. Ann had also great support in her grandfather who came to live with them when she was little. Her father was working a lot, sometimes two jobs. Ann was a very active child, interested in plays and sports, and she said that all the children came out with a very strong work ethic. Amanda remembers her childhood as warm and close. Her mother (she died 15 years ago) was a very warm and supportive person, and she said that they were very close. Her father worked a lot, Saturdays and Sundays, so he was absent from the home more. Her mother stayed home and took care of the children.

Two of the three mothers were homemakers and took care of the children; one mother worked all the time. Erikson (1985) claimed that “the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love, but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship” (p. 249). This statement seems to be true for Linda, Ann, and Amanda. Linda who had less time with her mother seems to have as much connection to her mother as Ann and Amanda have.

Adolescence is the time of identity and role confusion according to Erikson (1985). He points to this stage and says that it is a “psychological stage between childhood and adulthood and between the moralities learned by the child and the ethics to be developed by the adult” (p. 263). Erikson (1985) argued for the young adult to be granted a moratorium to get to know him/herself better. Linda, Ann, and Amanda were all working and going to school. However, Ann and Amanda had more difficulty in deciding what to do after high school (compared to Linda). It was their peers (girlfriends) who persuaded them to go into engineering in college. Linda was determined when she was in high school. She saw her brother doing very well as an engineer. Linda’s, Ann’s, and Amanda’s families have been very encouraging in their daughters’ education. Additionally, both Linda and Amanda had brothers who were engineers and they saw they were doing well. Ann’s best girlfriend’s sister was going to engineering school, and so was her boyfriend.

Linda, Ann, and Amanda have chosen an education in a male profession. That in itself has created obstacles for them. They chose their education for various reasons, but they were all very good in math and chemistry. They went through college, with only a few females who graduated before them in their field, and they liked it. It was fun, as Amanda

said. However, Ann experienced that it was hard, but on the other hand, she expected it to be difficult. In choosing an education that is male dominated, they had to be competitive.

They all wanted a high-paid job, *doing well*.

They have all experienced hurdles in their work and personal lives. In regard to work, they have told me about their experiences with the glass ceiling, harassment from men in the workplace, and difficulties being promoted like their male counterparts. Their experiences have been different from each other, but there have been many similarities, due to working in a male dominated business (oil and gas). At the same time, they show a very *go-ahead spirit*, as Ann expressed it: “I knew it was the industry.” The fact that they would meet with difficulties seems to be expected and they handle it in the industry. As Amanda said, “Today there are many women, but actually there are just a handful of women that hold any level of power.” The women have had several positions and have not given up in trying to reach a better position. To sum up, they have had persistence, endurance, and an inner strength to continue. In their personal lives, there have been challenges as well. Church has played a role in their identity formation, as well as their work environment. They all have families, and Ann and Amanda have children, also.

Ann is the only one who worked so hard that she was getting self-absorbed in her work and was not productive; she had to change. Amanda made changes in her personal life when she got a new job in another state. Linda had personal experience from working abroad that made her get closer to her inner self. They have had persistence, endurance, and inner strength to become the successful business women they are today.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

“To understand the identity formation process is to understand how individuals craft narratives from experiences, tell these stories internally and to others, and ultimately apply these stories to knowledge of self, other and the world in general” (Singer, 2004, p. 438). The women in this study have told their stories and it seems to me applied their stories to their knowledge of their selves. In the conclusions of the study, I will discuss what I think this knowledge is and has been the essence of the women’s drives in their lives. Findings concerning their self-knowledge are as follows: first, the relation between mothers and daughters; second, a delayed moratorium; and third, their discovery of an inner strength.

Main Themes

The Relation between Mothers and Daughters

The interaction between mother and the child creates “the basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being all right, of being oneself, and becoming what other people trust one will become” claimed Erikson, (1980, p. 65). Furthermore, he claimed that parents must provide for the child a “deep, and almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what they do and why” (1980, p. 65). In addition, children do not become neurotic from frustrations, but from the lack of meaning in these frustrations. Finally, Erikson (1985) argued that basic trust must be maintained throughout life.

A point of contention in the literature has to do with whether mothers carry the greater burden for instilling basic trust in the child in contrast to fathers or other

caregivers. Erikson is somewhat ambiguous on this point, in that he points to the central importance of the mother in some of his writings, while he allows for the importance of the father or other caregivers in other writings. In general, the psychiatric literature tends to blame the “bad mothers” for problems that individuals develop in childhood or later in life (Brown, 2008). However, in my study, I found that the mothers provided the core of identity and trust for the women in my sample far more than their fathers.

Linda, Ann, and Amanda are unanimous with regard to singling out the significance of their mothers. The women’s mothers have been instrumental to their futures in giving them a sense of being all right, or as Brown put it, *good enough*.

The mothers of the women encouraged their daughters to get a good education. In addition, it seems that they have given them a sense of trust from early on that has sustained and maintained itself through their lives. Also it seems that their mothers must have given them a conviction that there is a meaning to what they did and why. This seems to be especially true in the case of Linda, who suffered through physical illness and infirmity, only to be reminded by her mother that others in the world suffer more.

A Delayed Moratorium

Even though Erikson did not account for this phenomenon, the women in my sample seemed to undergo a delayed moratorium at mid-life. Erikson (1985) discussed ego identity versus role confusion at the stage of adolescence. In adolescence, adulthood begins and childhood ends. However, what the child had experienced in the past will be questioned again in adolescence. This is connected to rapid changes in body growth and “the new addition of genital maturity” according to Erikson (1985, p. 261). The bodily changes occur at the same time as internal psychological processes. Erikson (1985) stated

that “in their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, adolescents have to re-fight many of the battles of earlier years.” With these processes of physical and psychological change going on within and to the young individual, Erikson (1985) suggested the need for what he called a culturally structured “moratorium” (from the Latin; *mora* meaning pause, originally, a standing there thinking, *Dictionary of Etymology*, 1995). The moratorium allows teenagers to “re-connect” with their selves. Central to Erikson’s understanding of moratorium is the idea that the adolescent should be free of adult responsibilities as far as possible, and should have opportunities to experiment with commitments that are not binding in an adult sense of the term.

In this study of women’s identity formation on their journeys to leadership positions, Linda, Ann and Amanda were not granted any moratorium in their adolescence. Linda, especially, had to work for everything she achieved including her education. In Erikson’s (1985) theory of eight stages of development, the individual has to pass each stage successfully to go on to the next one. Every stage consists of a crisis or a challenge that has to be managed. If it is not managed appropriately, it can reappear later in life. In addition to the individual’s managing the crisis or challenges, society has to *meet* the individual’s *needs* at a particular stage. Linda, Ann and Amanda moved without interruption or a moratorium from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. As teenagers they were also working while they are going to school.

From the findings in my research I suggest that they experienced *a delayed moratorium state as adults*. The research shows that all of them, Linda, Amanda and Ann took a “time-out” as adults at a point in their lives when their addictions to work led to interpersonal crises with others. They told me about self-examination or “soul-searching”

or getting closer to themselves as a result. Linda went to South America, Ann to Italy and Amanda to a new state in the US. Their moratorium was a time for reflection, thinking about their lives and the meaning of life, something they had not had time to do before. The “time-out” varied in time, but it was *a standing there thinking*. Erikson (1968) stated that after a moratorium the individual is ready to return to love and work, and go on. They all described that they experienced getting *closer to themselves* and what life was *really* about. Linda said about her time in South America “those three years did something to my inner self.” It spoke to the core of who she was. Ann traveled to Italy. Her first trip to Europe, she granted herself a pause without working. She saw and experienced a different way of living, “For six days-with nothing to do, except sit and have coffee and notice people.” Ann is not just noticing people; she is noticing her inner self. She is observing her self observing people that are different, “not that everyone is friendly and that type of thing” but “you didn’t get the sense of tension, watch the girlfriends arm in arm, see people talking, see the pace people were walking.” Amanda’s job was in a new state in the US. She got a pause too, and she said ‘It was a turning point for me.” She got time- to think and reflect to make changes in her own life. She said that a combination of going to this new place in the gulf coast area, her youngest going to college, -it was a turning point for her and she realized that she could no longer stay in the marital situation much longer.

Erikson’s (1985) theory builds on the fact that if challenges at one stage have not been resolved adequately, those challenges can be expected to reappear in the future. Erikson (1968) said that identity formation is a process whereby the individual “judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them” (p. 22). Thus identity

formation results from many different elements in an individual's life. Linda, Ann and Amanda are ambitious and they have worked hard and they continue to do so. They have worked full time since college, except Ann, she worked part-time for 12 years. Ann described the part-time job as following "three days a week was just about right for me because it meant working only 40 hours a week instead of 80 or whatever I normally did." Although she worked a part-time job she worked long hours and so did Linda and Amanda. In addition, all of them have families. Ann and Amanda also had children while they worked. In their delayed moratorium they had some time to "feel and smell the ocean breeze." They all experienced an internal journey. According to Erikson (1968) a moratorium could be described as a confirmation of something useful and something that is worthwhile. In regard to Linda, Ann and Amanda, they were confirmed and validated with the belief that their own thoughts and what they saw as their inner self, what was meaningful to them was recognized. Furthermore, this change as a result of a moratorium depends on many different aspects claimed Erikson (1968) and for Linda, Ann and Amanda it seemed like the time was right.

Inner Strength

Linda, Ann and Amanda's journey reveal an inner strength to go on when they have faced obstacles and hurdles, in their work careers and their personal lives. It seems to me that they have psychological resilience, in other words, an ability to bounce back when times gets difficult. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2007) an understanding of resilience is *tending to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change*. Their inner strength illuminates their journeys from childhood, through adolescence and until today. There have been challenges for all of them. Especially for Linda, she endured severe health

problems in her childhood and adolescence. Everything she earned as a teenager from babysitting and everything else she could earn since she was 14 years old went into her first semester of tuition.

She has moved on, worked in underground mines, taken risks and been explorative as she was when she traveled to South America and lived in a primitive camp as the only American woman. She turned difficult times into something positive when she said after three years in South America “The fact that my childhood was very poor helped me to manage without much.”

Ann described her self as a “workaholic”. She had the capacity to change a work situation where she was no longer productive into a new situation where she claimed: “I like my self now”. After self-evaluation and self-reflection she left the Catholic Church, because she was overdoing things to “be good”. She never felt that she did well enough and there was always the feeling of guilt. She said “This is a difficult way to live your life, never having confidence that Heaven is yours.” She also quit a job when she was sidelined in the organization and could not get further.

Amanda had an inner strength when she endured a long marriage without telling anyone about the difficulties she experienced. She also had inner strength to get out of her marriage that was difficult when the time was right. She had the strength to help her son when he was having very difficult times. Amanda pursued her dream job, and got it in another state in the Gulf Area. To get a top job that was a “male role” was difficult, but after she had tried six times she got it. Like Ann, Amanda also quit a job when she “hit the glass ceiling”. It seems to me that strength includes being able to handle change. This

implies changing a situation without meaning to a situation with meaning (Schlossberg, 1989).

Erikson (1980) claimed that if the child tends to balance the struggle between positive and negative toward the positive, the child is prepared to meet *later crisis* with more confidence and better chance for unimpaired total development. The results from the study indicate that Linda, Ann and Amanda have been prepared for challenges later in life. Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti and Wallace (2006) found in their study that differences in psychological resilience “accounted for meaningful variation in daily emotional responses to stress” and furthermore, results from the study indicated that “over time, the experience of positive emotions functions to assist high-resilient individuals in their ability to recover effectively from daily stress” (p. 730). Erikson (1968) described a dialectical process when he explained identity formation as a process going on inside the individual at the same time as the individual deals with what is going on outside of himself or herself. A dialectical process can be understood as the tension or opposition between two interacting forces or elements (Merriam –Webster, 2007). Erikson argued in his writings that identity formation is a long-term process.

Linda, Ann and Amanda have had social support within their environment. Their mothers have been very encouraging for them in their development. Their siblings, especially the brothers, have been role models for Linda and Amanda in terms of getting into a male profession. They have had peers and girlfriends that have encouraged them in school and a sport, especially for Ann, her girlfriend was instrumental in going to engineering school. All of them claimed that their life would have been different had it not been for their girlfriends. Ann said that her marriage was good today because of her

girlfriends support. Amanda said that she would not have gotten a divorce if it was not for the support of her girlfriends. They each report that they do not have many girlfriends, but rather a little group with whom they have close relations.

Additionally, they have had helpers like Linda's maid in South America. Amanda had a nanny to help her with all the children so she could work full time. Also, a factor might be a religious belief or a belief in something (ideology, philosophy) in their families. Werner (1995) claimed that studies of resilient children from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds showed that families of resilient children often held religious beliefs that provided meaning and stability. Erikson (1980) claimed that parents must provide for the child a belief that there is a meaning to what they do and why. In Ann and Amanda's families there were religious beliefs that provided meaning and stability. In Linda's family there was a belief about values, right or wrong, that provided a direction for Linda. Riesman (2001) argued that inner-directed people were guided by an internal gyroscope. "This instrument, once it is set by the parents and other authorities, keeps the inner-directed person, *on course*." Linda claimed that she had the same values as her parents. It seems that her parents installed a belief system that guided her on her journey. Linda, Ann and Amanda could make it on their own, they had what they needed to succeed. In addition, one factor that seemed to be a part of their inner strength is authenticity, described as *one acting on one's own authority* (Greek: *authentes*, *Dictionary of Etymology*, 1995). Erikson, according to Friedman (1999) was concerned about the needs for individuals to feel "whole". Furthermore, Friedman (1999) showed what Erikson explained was the core of a feeling of wholeness: "a sense of continuity and sameness which gradually united the

inner and outer worlds” – the inner emotions and the outer social circumstances—leaving one with a clear identity and strong confidence (p. 252).

This study reveals that Linda, Ann and Amanda have shown an ability to stay true to themselves, or had a feeling of *wholeness* as Erikson stated, in work and their private lives. It has not been a straight road, but when they have met challenges during their journeys, they have had the skills and resources to solve them. They pursued and fulfilled their dreams in getting an education in a male-dominated area. When they got their college degrees they were the second of women to graduate (one woman graduated the year before) as engineers from their respective colleges. And as Ann expressed when her counselor told her that she was not smart enough to be an engineer: “I would have to say that not less than a million times throughout those years, when I was in classes I thought was way too tough for me to get,” she adds, “I hear that counselor saying you are not smart enough to be an engineer.” She tells me that she remembers thinking to her self “it was somewhere between ‘I’ll show him’ and maybe he was right.” It seems that Linda, Ann and Amanda, in most situations, have lived authentic lives, being true to themselves and in balance with their values and beliefs (Wood, Maltby, Baliousis, Linley & Joseph, 2008). They have moved in and out of jobs to get to where they are today. Somewhere on their journeys they have met difficulties, in their professions and in their private lives. But, they have stayed on course, solved the problems and, in so doing, continued on their journeys.

So, what do these findings mean for the field of HRD? Linda, Ann and Amanda, have 30 years each of work experience from different corporations in America. They have given voice to activities in their organizations that are not desirable within corporations.

Linda, Ann and Amanda have in this study revealed that they have been sidelined in their organizations; furthermore, Ann lost her job, because she had a husband that worked too, and Amanda applied over and over again for a job she was qualified for. The only hurdle was that she was a woman. She did get the job after applying 6 times. There is still much work to do in the field of HRD concerning women's experiences, both, in the corporate environment and other areas, claimed Bierema (2002). This study is a contribution in this regard. Furthermore Bierema (2009) argued that HRD as a field identified with a masculine rationality and masculine attributes like "being strong, mechanical, assertive, objective and controlled" (p. 69). This research supports that Linda, Ann and Amanda's experienced their respective organizations to hold these attributes.

Limits and Recommendations

Because of my research design, I did not study women who tried to succeed, but failed. Further research on this neglected area is warranted. Furthermore, there is a need for studies of women with high expectations who do not meet all of their expectations. In addition there is a need for comparison and contrast studies, to determine the factors that are necessary for success versus failure. Based on further research, one would be in a better position to enact social policy that would help women break the glass ceiling. This study showed that Linda, Ann and Amanda worked without a break from graduating from college. One finding from this study was a suggestion that Linda, Ann and Amanda had a delayed moratorium –a pause- to think and reflect.

There is a need for studies about what systems are available and desirable for both women and men in corporations to get -a pause- to think and reflect, and in so doing go back to work rejuvenated and ready, to go on.

Finding from this study suggests that organizations are still masculine and therefore support Bierema (2009) argument about masculine rationality. For the field of HRD there should be more studies that investigate these masculine perspectives and how they impact women's journeys to top positions. Furthermore, programs that are implemented in organizations for helping and developing people should be sincere, for both, women and men. As Erikson argued, a human being should *mean* what he/she does. So should corporations. In addition, such proposed studies could illuminate factors in personal fulfillment in these human beings private lives as Erikson intended. Along these lines, further theoretical analysis as well as empirical research should explore Erikson's concept of sincerity versus Riesman's (2001) conceptualization of "fake sincerity." How can one define, evaluate, and study sincerity, and what are its consequences for ego-identity and success versus failure in the workplace for both men and women? Do males and females differ in their understanding of sincerity versus fake sincerity, and if they do, what are the social consequences of these differences in cultural and personal perception?

Furthermore, the additional research that must be done in this area of the relationship of ego-identity to success in the workplace must be interdisciplinary. Despite the fact that the field of HRD is primarily interdisciplinary in its orientation, Erikson's work and concepts have been researched primarily by psychologists. There is very little sociological theory or research on women's ego-identity in relationship to the success. We have seen that related issues of character and personality development in a social context were developed by Erikson's colleague at Harvard University, David Riesman. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that both Erikson and Riesman are icons in academia, their insights into male versus female identity in relation to work has not been carried into

interdisciplinary research. I propose that Erikson's and Riesman's insights regarding identity and social character be self-consciously incorporated into research by psychologists as well as sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists. In other words, the idea of identity must be studied in relation to social, historical, and cultural context.

Another set of recommendations is to further study Erikson's life and work, not from a narrow psychological point of view, but from a social policy perspective, which applies Erikson's theory to female success. Regarding Erikson's biography, further research is needed into Erikson's relationship with his mother, with Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, who was Erikson's mentor and therapist, and Erikson's wife and daughter. We note that there is a feminine influence and orientation to Erikson's interest and work identity. After all, in contrast to Carl Gustav Jung and other Freudians who derived their ideas from or rebelled against Sigmund Freud directly, Erikson is a notable exception in that his psychoanalytic orientation was derived primarily from Freud's daughter. Insufficient attention is paid to this important fact in the biographies or analyses of Erikson. In addition, there may be feminine influences in the very fact that Erikson's work was primarily interdisciplinary in its orientation, and was not exclusively psychological. As I have demonstrated throughout this work, Erikson's work deals with sociological, historical, and anthropological and other scientific perspectives and issues that go beyond psychology. He wrote about ego-identity formation in historical figures from Martin Luther to Mohandas Gandhi, and social groups ranging from Nazis to Sioux Indians in the Dakotas—in all these studies, he always and consistently wove social, cultural, and historical context into his psychological studies. An interdisciplinary approach

which follows Erikson's lead is most likely to shed light on women's issues pertaining to professional and personal success. For example, studies of historical female figures such as Joan of Arc or Margaret Thatcher could and should be conducted along the lines of the interdisciplinary approach that Erikson takes toward Luther and Gandhi. Lastly, not just managers, but other groups of female professionals like pilots, college presidents, military officers and other individuals in leadership positions should be studied in terms of Erikson's theory. The following is a list of specific research questions which flow out of my study and which are recommended for further empirical as well as theoretical study:

1. Is identity something which is fundamentally the same in all individuals or is it different for males versus females?
2. What is the relationship between one's ego-identity and one's social and cultural environment? How does this relationship differ for males versus females?
3. What are the private as well as social consequences of individuals not being able to take advantage of a "moratorium" as proposed by Erikson?
4. To what extent are gender differences in identity formation due to "original nature" versus those acquired from social experience?
5. What evidence is there that gender differences in identity formation are acquired rather than inborn?
6. How can one account for the differences in achievement between the sexes in relation to the issue of ego-identity?
7. In the future, will women equal men in terms of achievement and

success in the workplace?

8. What are the effects of ego-identity upon educational achievement in men versus women?
9. What is the relative importance of mothers versus fathers in the development of ego-identity in women?
10. What are the social consequences of men or women not having an opportunity to undergo a “delayed moratorium?”

Last Words from Researcher

Like Linda, Ann and Amanda’s journey, this research has indeed been a journey for me as well. I moved to America from Norway to pursue my doctoral degree. There have been some hurdles to “navigate” as language, and learning a new culture even though American and Norwegian cultures have much in common. English is my second language, which has made my work harder. On the other hand, my Scandinavian background has been an advantage also, when studying Erikson’s texts. (Erikson’s mother was Danish).

However, it is strange how one forget struggles and hurdles now that the dissertation is completed and this journey is coming to an end. What have I learned these years? There is so much and it has been fun many times, but it is impossible to not say something about E. H. Erikson’s great writings. I have learned to really appreciate his knowledge about human beings in general, and his views on identity and identity formation. I am forever thankful for what I have learned from him. And I am thankful that Linda, Ann and Amanda shared their experiences with me. I was born and raised in a little mining community in Norway. It was a different and interesting place to grow up. At the most there lived only 400-500 people there, coming from all parts of Norway. At one

time there were people from all the counties in Norway. Although they were Norwegians they had different customs and traditions. I believe that my background, growing up in such a “diverse” community created a curiosity toward the question “how do we become who we are?” How do we as human beings feel a sense of *wholeness*? I want to end these last words with how Erikson suggested this process of belonging, could evolve, namely as “a sense of continuity and sameness which gradually united the inner and outer worlds” – the inner emotions and the outer social circumstances—leaving one with a clear identity and strong confidence (Friedman, 1999 p. 252).

REFERENCES

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society*, 4(2) 139-158.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). *Women's way of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bertrand, M., & Hallock, K. F. (2001). The gender gap in top corporate culture. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 7(2), 145-164.
- Beauvoir, S. D. (1989). *The second sex*. New York: Knopf.
- Bierema, L. L. (1996). How executive women learn corporate culture. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 7(2), 145-164.
- Bierema, L. L. (1998). A feminist approach to HRD research. In R. J. Toracco (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development annual conference*, Oak Brook, IL, 1998, pp. 293-300.
- Bierema, L. L. (2002). A feminist approach to HRD research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 1(2), 244-268.
- Bierema, L. L. (2002). The process of women's gender consciousness development. In Egan, T. M., (Ed.), Lynham, S. A., (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development annual conference*, Honolulu, HI, 2002, pp. 197-184.
- Bierema, L. L., & Cseh, M. (2003). Evaluating AHRD research using a feminist research framework. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 14(1), 5-26.
- Bierema, L. L. (2009). Critiquing human resource development's dominant masculine rationality and evaluating its impact. *Human Resource Development Review*, 8(1), 68-96.

- Blau, D. F., & Kahn, M. L. B. (2007). The gender pay gap: Have women gone as far as they can? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21, 7-23.
- Bloland, E. S. (2005). *In the shadow of fame. A memoir by the daughter of Erik H. Erikson*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Boxer, D., & Gritsenko, E. (2005). Women and surnames across cultures: Reconstituting identity in marriage. *Women and Language*, 28(2) 1-11.
- Brooks, A. K., & Edwards, K. (2009). Allies in the workplace: Including LGBT in HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(1), 136-149.
- Brown, N. W. (2008). *Children of the self-absorbed. A grown-up's guide to getting over narcissistic parents*. (2nd ed) Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Byrd, M.Y. (2009). Telling the stories of leadership: If we don't tell them they won't be told. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(5), 582-605.
- Capper, C. (1992). *Margaret Fuller. An American life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Catalyst (2007a). *Census of women corporate officers and top earners of the Fortune 500*. Retrieved August 29, 2007, from <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/13/2007-catalyst-census-of-women-corporate-officers-and-top-earners-of-the-fortune-500>
- Catalyst (2007b). The bottom line: Corporate performance and women's representation on boards. Retrieved February 16, 2008, from http://www.catalyst.org/pressroom/press_bottom_line.2.shtml
- Catalyst (2009). Women in management. Retrieved October 3, 2009, from <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/206/women-in-us-management>

- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 507-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry. Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, (CEE) 6th Ed, Retrieved October 12, 2009 from <http://www.encyclopedia.com>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design. Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Danish, S. J. (1981). Life-span human development and intervention: A necessary link. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 9(2) 40-43.
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (3rd ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *The discipline and practice of qualitative research. Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative material* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Dictionary of Etymology* (1995). The origins of American English words. (R.K. Barnhart Ed.)
New York: HarperCollins Publisher.
- Dwyer, S., Richard, O. C., & Chadwick, K. (2003). Gender diversity in management and firm performance: The influence of growth orientation and organizational culture. *Journal of Business Research*, 56, 1009-1019.
- Erikson, E. H. (1962). *Young man Luther. A study in psychoanalysis and history*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1978). Reflections on Dr. Borg's Life Cycle. In E. H. Erikson (Ed.), *Adulthood*. New York: American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1985). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Evans, J. (1995). *Feminist theory today. An introduction to second-wave feminism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fog, J. (1994). *Med samtalen som udgangspunkt. Det kvalitative forskningsinterview*. Kobenhavn, Denmark: Akademisk Forlag.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview. From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 695-727). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Freud, S. (1974). *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. New York: Penguin.
- Friedan, B. (2001). *The feminine mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Friedman, L. J. (1999). *Identity's architect: A biography of Erik H. Erikson*. New York: Scribner.
- Gedro, J. (2007). Conduction research on LGBT issues: Leading the field all over again. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 18(2), 153-158.
- Gedro, J. (2009). LGBT career development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(1), 54-66.
- Geiger, S. N. G. (1986). Women's life histories. Method and content. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 11, 334-351.
- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice. Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ginzberg, L. D. (2002). Re-viewing the first wave. *Feminist Studies* 28(2) 419-434.
- Goffman, E. (1986). *Frame analysis. An essay on the organization of experience*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Goldin, C., & Shim, M. (2004). Making a name: Women's surname at marriage and beyond. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(2) 143-160.
- Goodman, J. S., Field, D. L., & Blum, T. C. (2003). Cracks in the glass ceiling. In what kinds of organizations do women make it to the top? *Group & Organization Management*, 28(4) 475-502.
- Graubard, S. R. (1978). Preface to the adulthood. In E. H. Erikson (Ed.), *Adulthood*. New York: American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation. Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gullestad, M. (2003). Fighting for a sustainable self-image. The role of descent in individual identification. *European Journal of Anthropology*, 42, 51-62.
- Heede, D. (2008). Third-wave feminism reaches the Danish coast: Did the Butler do it? *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 16(3), 207-210.
- Heinamaa, S. (1997). What is a woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the foundations of the sexual difference. *Hypana*, 12(1), 20-39.
- Helfat, E. C., Harris, D., & Wolfson, J. P. (2007). The pipeline to the top: Women and men in the top executive ranks of US corporations. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 20, 42-64.
- Hemmings, C. (2005). Telling feminist stories. *Feminist Theory*, 6(2), 115-139.
- Hendry, P. M. (2007). The future of narrative. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 487-498.
- Hite, L. M. & McDonald, K. S. (1999). Questioning the viability of a woman's network as a management development activity. In K. P. Kuchinke (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development annual conference*, Arlington, VA., 1999, pp.897-902.
- Hite, L. M. (2004). Black and white women managers: Access to opportunity. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 15(2), 131-146.
- Hoffman, R. M. (2006). Gender self-definition and gender self-acceptance in women: Intersections with feminist, womanist, and ethnic identities. *Journal Counseling and Development*, 84, 358-372.

- Hull, C. L. (1997). The need in thinking materiality in Theodor W. Adorno and Judith Butler. *Radical Philosophy*, 84 22-35.
- Hymowitz, C., & Schellhardt, T. D. (March 1986). The corporate woman: The glass ceiling. *Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)*, March, 24.
- Josselson, R. (1987). *Finding herself. Pathways to identity development in women*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Josselson, R., (1995). Imagining the real. In R. Josselson, & A. Lieblich (Eds). *Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives*, Vol.3 (pp.27-44). Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kanter, R. M. (1993). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Katchadourian, H. A. (1978). Medical perspectives on adulthood. In E. H. Erikson (Ed.), *Adulthood*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self. Problem and process in human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Klenke, K. (1996). *Women and leadership. A contextual perspective*. New York: Springer.
- Kormanik, M. B. (2009). Sexuality as a diversity factor: An examination of awareness. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(1), 24-36.
- Krishnan, H. A., & Park, D. (2005). A few good women on top management teams. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, 1712-1720.
- Krishnan, G. V., & Parsons, L. M. (2008). Getting to the bottom line: An exploration of gender and earnings quality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78, 65-76.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance through interviews and dialogues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(3), 480-500.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Hoffmann Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lee, P. M., & James, E. H. (2007). She'-E-OS: Gender effects and investor reactions to the announcements of top executive appointments. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28, 227-241.
- Levinson, D. J. (1996). *The seasons of a woman's life*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Lieblich, A. (2006). Vicissitudes. A study, a book, a play: Lessons from the work of a narrative scholar. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(1), 60-80.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Narrative authority vs. perjured testimony: Courage, vulnerability and truth. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(2), 131-138.
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551-558.
- Marcia, J. E., & Friedman, M. L. (1970). Ego identity status in college women. *Journal of Personality*, 38(2), 249-263.
- Mary Wollstonecraft. *A short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark and William Godwin: Memoirs of the author of the rights of women*. Edited, with an introduction by R. Holmes. New York: Penguin Books.

- Meacham, M. (2007). Why all the fuss? *Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association*, 10(4), 10-16.
- Merriam, S. B. (1991). How research produces knowledge. In J. M. Peters & P. Jarvis (Eds.), *Adult education*. (pp. 42-65). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary* (11th ed.) (2007). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc.
- Metcalf, B. D. (2008). A feminist poststructuralist analysis of HRD: Why bodies and reflexivity matter. *Human Resource Development International*, 11(5), 447-463.
- Meyerson, D. E., & Fletcher, J.K. (2000). A modest manifesto for shattering the glass ceiling. *Harvard Business Review*, 127-136.
- Moi, T. (2005). *Sex, gender, and the body*. The student edition of *What is a woman?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Northouse, P. G. (2001). *Leadership, theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ong, a. D., Bergeman, C. C., Bisconti, T.L., & Wallace, K. A. (2006). Psychological resilience positive emotions and successful adaption to stress later in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(4), 730-749.
- Phipps, J. (1997). Still depressed after all these years. *American Enterprise*, 8(1), 74-76.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 471-486.

- Price, J. (1999). In Acknowledgment: A review and critique of qualitative research text. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Making meaning of narratives*. (pp. 1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing. A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 959-978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Riesman, D. (2001). *The lonely crowd*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rosener, J. B. (1990). Ways women lead. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(6) 119-125.
- Russ-Eft, D. F., Dickinson, P. H., & Levine, R. (2008). Examining career success of minority and women emergency medical technicians (EMTs): A LEAD Project. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 19(4), 281-298.
- Scanlon, J. (2009). Sexy from the start: Anticipatory elements of second wave feminism. *Women's Studies*, 38, 127-150.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). *Overwhelmed. Coping with life's ups and downs*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E. B., & Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Singer, J. A. (2004). Narrative identity and meaning making across the adult lifespan: An introduction. *Journal of Personality*, 72(3) 437-460
- Smith, J. K., and Hodkinson, P. (2005). Relativism, criteria and politics. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 915- 932). Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sorell, G. T., & Montgomery, M. J. (2001). Feminist perspectives on Erikson's theory:

Their relevance for contemporary identity development research. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1(2), 97-128.

Sugarman, L. (1986). *Life-span development. Concepts, theories and intervention*. New York:

Routledge, Chapman, and Hall Inc.

Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. F. (2001). *Foundation of HRD*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler

Publisher.

Texas A&M University. (2002). *Definition of HRD*. Department of Education

Administration and Human Resource Development.

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (1995). A solid investment: Making full use of the

nation's human capital. Recommendations of the Federal Glass Ceiling

Commission. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (2008). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics October 2008

or Highlights of women's earnings in 2007. Retrieved September, 10, 2008

<http://www.catalyst.org/publication/206/women-in-us-management>

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (2009). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved

October, 5, from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-intro-2009.htm>

Wentling, R. M. (2004). Diversity and HRD. In Egan, T. M, (Ed.), Morris, M.L, (Ed.), &

Inbakumar, V, (Ed). *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development annual conference*, Austin, TX, 2004, pp. 593-602.

Werner, E. E. (1995). Resilience in development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*,

4(3), 91-85.

- Williams, E. N., & Morrow, S. L. (2009). Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A pan-paradigmatic perspective. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4-5), 576-582.
- Wood, A. M., Maltby, J., Baliousis, M., Linley, A. P., & Joseph, S. (2008). The authentic personality: A theoretical and empirical conceptualization and the development of the authenticity scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 55*(3), 385-399.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2004). *A vindication of the rights of woman*. (M. Brody Ed.) New York: Penguin Books.
- Wrigley, B. J. (2002). Glass ceiling? What glass ceiling? A qualitative study of how women view the glass ceiling in public relations and communications management. *Journal of Public Research, 14*(1), 27-55
- Young, A. M., Cady, S., & Foxon, M. J. (2006). Demystifying gender differences in mentoring: Theoretical perspectives and challenges for future research on gender and mentoring. *Human Resource Development Review, 5*(2), 148-175.
- Young-Bruehl, E. (1988). *Anna Freud, a biography*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Zack, N. (2005). *Inclusive feminism. A third wave theory of women's commonality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Zelechowski, D. D., & Bilimoria, D. (2004). Characteristics of women and men corporate inside directors in the US. *Corporate Governance, 12*(3), 337-342.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide
(Modified after Belenky et al, 1986)

Section I- Background and Self-Description

1. What stands out for you in your life over the past few years?
What kinds of things have been important?
What stays with you?
2. Tell me something about what your life is like right now.
3. What do you care about, think about?
4. Tell me something about who are important people at this time in your life? Can you explain why?
5. How would you describe yourself to yourself?
If you were to tell yourself who you really are, how would you do that?
6. Tell me something about your childhood?
What was it like, what stays with you?
What did you like to do? (Activities, sports)
What about adolescence?
Who were important people for you, both in childhood and adolescence?
When you look back, can you describe some significant events?
7. Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past?
What led to the changes?
8. Tell me something about your relations to your family and their relations to you?

Section II- Your journey to leadership position (s)

1. When you look back on your journey to leadership position, how can you describe it for me?
2. On your journey to leadership position, how did you overcome hurdles or obstacles?

4. What have been turning points for you in your journey?
5. What have you experienced of uncertainty, change and choices on your journey?
6. What have you experienced as excitement, personal change and growth on your journey?
7. How do you structure your life in a busy and challenging job?
What are your priorities in your daily life?
What principle guides you?
How will you describe your individual growth?
What is your personal drives and motivation in what you do?

Section III-Gender and Relations to other

1. How does being a female make a difference from males in your field? How has your sense of yourself as a woman been changing? How has your sense of yourself as a woman been changing?
2. When you look back on your life, which relationships has been the most important to you?
Can you describe these relationships?
3. Have you had a relationship with someone who helped you shape the person you have become?
How would you describe that?
How important was that in your life?

IV- Conclusion

1. How will you look back on your life?
2. Are there any other questions I should have asked you that would have thrown some light on these issues we are interested in... that is, women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions?

APPENDIX B: PRESENTATION LETTER

ASE D. KNABEN

Presentation Letter

Dear,

First, I thank you for considering participating in my research study. At this point in my study I am at the dissertation stage and I am collecting data and to complete my research.

My research is on women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions. I want to find out more about the women who make it to executive level in corporations. And more specifically, which factors play a role in their identity formation as they travel to these positions. To complete this study I would like to gather information about your story and your experiences on your journey to your leadership position.

A little bit about my self. I am a Norwegian woman who came to Texas, (A&M) in 2003 to pursue my PhD degree in the field of Human Resource Development. The field of Human Resource Development is concerned with developing and unleashing human expertise for the purpose of organizational development and improving individual performance. Development of the individual and the organizations has always been of interest for me. Before I came to Texas, I was employed by a university in Norway where I lectured in leadership and organizational culture at the department of Education.

I ask you to be willing to see me for an interview at your convenience at a location of your choice. I will ask you for one or two follow up conversations, one hour each, over two-three months. (If it is possible for you it would be beneficial to the research to "shadow" you one day in the same time period). Your participation will be confidential. No identification of you or your corporation will be revealed.

I will also ask you to allow me to use a tape recorder for the interview, but this is voluntary. The records will be destroyed after 1 year.

A study about women's identity formation on their journey to leadership positions will be of interest for the field of HRD and for organizations, and politicians that are interested in understanding some of the keys factors that enable women to get to leadership positions. I appreciate your interest to participate in this study. Should there be any questions that you would like to hear more about, please contact me.

Sincerely,
Ase Dagmar Knaben,
PhD student,
Texas A&M University

VITA

Ase Dagmar Knaben received her Bachelor's degree from Stavanger University College in education in 1985. She received her degree Master of Philosophy (Candidata Rerum Politicarum) in social science from the University of Tromso in 1997. She entered the Educational Human Resource Development program at Texas A&M University in 2003 and received her PhD in May 2010. Her research interests include women's development, identity formation and questions related to identity, women and workplace issues, and organizational culture. Dr. Knaben may be reached at Texas A&M University, College of Education, Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development, College Station, Texas 77843.